

WAGES AND LABOUR  
ORGANISATION  
in the  
BRASS TRADES  
of  
BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT.  
by  
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Being a Dissertation presented for the  
Degree of Ph.D. at the University of Birmingham.

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UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

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## P R E F A C E.

The origin of this monograph on "Wages and Labour Organisation in the Brass Trades of Birmingham and District" may be traced to the researches of Dr. G. C. Allen into the industrial development of Birmingham and the Black Country, but the writer himself claims all responsibility for the manner in which the work has been undertaken, and for the mode of presentation. Actually, it was not in the first place intended that the subject of wages should be treated, as the subject which had been suggested to the writer as a result of the aforementioned researches was that of the size of the business unit. It was thought that although one could point to the general features of industrial and commercial organisation and make a broad generalisation that the small business concern has been the typical product of the Birmingham district, there was nothing to indicate a measurement of the typical size or of any change that may have taken place over a period of time. So the writer's first intention was to attempt some such statistical measurements.

Soon after the making of this decision, it was realised that the necessary statistical data would be difficult of acquisition, since "size" introduces so many variables such as (1) number of persons employed on production and

maintenance, (2) number of persons employed in administration, distribution and management, (3) amount of capital equipment, and so on. Hence it was deemed advisable to switch over to the subject of wages in the hope that information on numbers employed per firm may indirectly be forthcoming. In the course of the investigations, the concomitant of wages, viz. labour organisation had also to be studied. The preliminary doubts as to the accessibility to information on the question of "size" of the business unit" proved to be well-founded, for there are few published or unpublished records that can be usefully employed in that connection. The Census returns are of no service; the Factory Inspection department of the Home Office has no convenient record of the number of establishments in different industries, neither of the numbers employed in them; the Office of Trade Boards has figures for such establishments as fall within the scope of any Trade Board, but it is not prepared to publish the results. The only remaining sources are the workmen's and employers organisations, and published directories. The trade organisations have no need for this type of information, and therefore cannot oblige the investigator with material; and directories, although they are quite capable of supplying a rough idea of the growth or decline in the number of firms over a long period of years (provided the same publisher's

directory is used) cannot in any way provide an indication of the average size of such firms. In any case, classification of trades for the purposes of a directory is not designed with a view to helping the statistician. The names of many firms are recorded twice or even more times if they engage in the manufacture of more than any one class of articles.

Hence attention is given almost exclusively to wages and labour organisation in a small number of trades localised within the West Midland region. The title given to the work is a trifle misleading, for the writer has gone beyond the brass trades. The only reasons why "Wages and Labour Organisation in the Brass Trades" has been chosen are, (1) the difficulty of choosing a title which would include within a small number of words the scope of the three trades treated in this work, and (2) the fact that fully four-fifths of the work is concerned with the brass trades, these constituting a much larger industry, and possessing a trade union with records dating back to the year 1872.

The three industries covered by the investigation were chosen with no fixed design beyond the fact that they were largely Birmingham and Black Country trades. It was hoped originally to include a bigger number of such localised trades, but time would not permit. There are still other metal wares trades in the area, such as steel pens, nuts



and belts, screws, nails, needles and fish-hooks, harness furniture and cart-gear, chains and anchors, which would probably yield to similar treatment as that given in these pages for bedsteads and locks, but it would take many years of patient research to discover a complete record of that character. This work may be regarded as what a portion of such a book would look like. There is no doubt that too little is known of past and present labour conditions in the Birmingham and Black Country trades. There are often studies dealing with our basic national industries, but only on rare occasions is light shed upon conditions in smaller industries. That these latter repay a certain amount of study will be evident from what is contained in these chapters.

The writer is only too painfully aware of a certain lack of balance in the work. There is too much brass trades and too little else. The writer is even prepared to admit that the Chapters 9, 10, and 11 could be amplified; much less time has been spent on research in those trades. Trade union records, however, are less abundant in those cases, and the investigator would find little to add to them by further reference to the trade unions. Perhaps, at this stage, the writer might be allowed to make an apology for the inordinate length of Chapter 8, but there was no very suitable point at which the treatment of Trade Board

administration could be divided into several separate chapters.

Two further apologies are due to the reader. The first is that the writer cannot claim to possess a deep knowledge of the technical processes and of mechanical equipment in the industries with which this dissertation deals, and it may be regarded as presumptuous on his part to discuss questions of skill and changes in productive methods. The writer would be the first to admit that, but nevertheless, he can, in tracing changes and in describing them, lead the way to general principles; and this without danger of misrepresentation. The second apology comes nearer home. The writer is not satisfied with the statistical work involved in Chapter 12 and in Appendix A. Here, of course, the research student is distinctly limited by his sources of material, and it has been scarcely possible to draw any reliable conclusions from the figures utilised.

The whole work has been based on written sources as well as on personal enquiry. In any text dealing with wages, one never looks for many footnotes, simply because it is not the type of work for which written sources are available. But references and footnotes have been given in full throughout the work, and the writer has frequently found it convenient to make use of a footnote to amplify, qualify or explain some statement made in the main text. The debt owed by the

writer to Dr. Allen's "Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country" will be obvious to any who have read that work. Not only has material from the text of that book itself been drawn upon, but sources of reference outlined in the bibliography attached to that book have proved to be indispensable. Dr. Allen did not pretend to have dealt with wages and labour organisation, so that this present work amplifies his. Much of what is included in Part II of Chapter 2 on the "sub-contracting" system will be found in the greater work referred to, but at the same time it will be seen that further light has been thrown on some aspects of that system by these later researches.

Another written source which has proved a useful guide is W. A. Dalley's "Life Story of W. J. Davis". Here again, there is bound to be some duplication; but that book treats wages movements in the brass trades from an entirely different angle, and it goes no farther than the year 1914. In any case, it has been added to considerably in this present work, and there is much historical matter here that is not in Dalley's book.

The writer has also made use of the Webb collection of old trade union literature and of his manuscripts, all housed at the British Library of Economics and Political Science attached to the London School of Economics.



There is a mine of information there awaiting the research student, although it was only in a few isolated cases that the writer has had to draw upon them. These manuscripts performed one great service in placing the writer on the track of new information.

The bulk of the material has been gleaned by personal enquiry and from reports, copies of agreements, minutes, pamphlets and other records of the trades unions mentioned in the text. The writer has found trades union officials, on the whole, most willing to assist and reasonable in stating a case. The present General Secretary of the Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society, Mr. A. H. Gibbard, has been most tolerant, kind and courteous. He himself had toyed with the idea of writing a history of recent events in the life of the union, but after the writer's first visit, he relinquished this responsibility in his favour. It is to be hoped the result is satisfactory. It was only with difficulty that material was obtained from another trade union secretary who admitted his own preparations for writing the history of his society. Hence, no old records and documents were forthcoming in that direction. In addition, government officials and employers have been approached for information. References to the written sources are given in the footnotes, and amongst these are bound to figure various official



publications and reports. There may yet be some untapped sources of information of which the writer has no knowledge, but he thinks it can fairly be claimed that the record given in the ensuing pages for the brass trades of Birmingham and District is an exhaustive one.

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University of Birmingham.  
May 1930.

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES.**

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY.

The writing of monographs on social and economic phenomena is now a fashionable occupation, and the more we write the more scope do we find for our researches. There is an ever-increasing tendency for us to get impatient with the economic theoretician and we are often incredulous with regard to his conclusions. More and more attention is thus being given to descriptive studies in more limited fields, as a supplement to the work of the theoretician, and greater effort is being expended on quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. In our descriptions, history cannot be ignored, as we are more likely to gain most benefit from our investigations in the economic sphere when fact and speculation are combined. We need the theorist, the historian, the statistician and the idealist; they must all work hand in hand in the great human search for truth about our every-day dealings with one another.

But work of this nature can only be undertaken satisfactorily if the field is not too wide and if we avoid as far as possible the cross currents which make for complexity. So, in the economic sphere we need to



choose our subject of enquiry with care, and then to proceed step by step from district conditions to national conditions, and thence to more extensive regions. We must necessarily confine our studies to industries taken separately, or to groups of cognate industries, so that our course towards the light is one huge synthesis.

It is on these lines that the following pages are planned, and although it cannot be denied that the work is an empirical study, the accounts of various experiences of working conditions in different trades within a defined region do lead us to certain general principles for conditions of labour in different circumstances. The region to which the results of these investigations apply is the West Midland area conveniently designated Birmingham and District.<sup>(1)</sup> This is an area in which metal working trades are all-important, the heavier trades having their seat in the South Staffordshire and North East Worcestershire region known to all of us as the Black Country, and the lighter finishing trades being found more in evidence in Birmingham itself and in Coventry to the south-east. There are some trades in this area which are peculiar to it, and for which there is a high degree of concentration around Birmingham and district, with little of them elsewhere. On the other hand there are trades which

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(1) The definition of "Birmingham and District" given in 1921 most aptly covers the area in mind. Vide Appendix E.

are equally important in other industrial regions as in this particular district.

Three industries have been taken as the basis of enquiry in this work, although more than three trades have come under review in the course of investigations. These three industries are :-

1. The Brass (and copper) Industry.
2. The Metallic Bedsteads Industry.
3. The Lock, Latches and Key Industry.

Actually, the brass and copper industry is composed of two distinct branches in the area, the "primary" branch of metal production, and the finishing branch. Both of these are treated in the ensuing pages, although more attention has been devoted to the finishing branch, that is to the brassworking trades. There are really several trades within the industry, and these are very much connected and intermingled as the reader will judge for himself in following the account. For the brass and copper industry as a whole there is a third branch of copper smelting and manufacture, but as this is not a Birmingham trade and copper is imported into the district from elsewhere, it has received no consideration.

With the exception of the "primary" branch of the brass and copper industry, all three industries may be



regarded as finishing and assembling trades. All three are essentially Birmingham and Black Country preserves and there is a high degree of localisation in the area. This is shown by the following figures extracted from the Industries Report of the 1921 Census. The tables give the total number of persons engaged in these industries, (as far as the census classification allows such to be determined) in England and Wales and in Birmingham and District.<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Number of Persons engaged in Brass and Copper Industry. 1921.

	Total.	Per cent
England and Wales	63906	100.0
Birmingham and District	37737	59.5

(2) Number of Persons engaged in Metallic Bedstead Industry. 1921.

	Total.	Per cent
England and Wales	6083	100.0
Birmingham and District	3911	64.3

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(1) In other parts of the text figures for the three counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire are frequently quoted, but that is usually for purposes of comparison with other dates when no separate record existed for Birmingham and District.

(3) Number of Persons engaged in Lock and Key Industry. 1921.

	Total.	Per cent
England and Wales	7857	100.0
Birmingham and District	6493	82.6

The degree of concentration is greatest in the lock and key trade, but 80 per cent is a good proportion for the least localised. One might have expected the figure to be higher for brass and copper, but there is no doubt whatever that as an industry, it has its home in the Birmingham district. As for localisation within the area itself, it may be taken that the trades are carried on in several centres, but the brass trade and the metallic bedstead trade are almost entirely Birmingham trades, whereas the lock trade is almost exclusively a Black Country concern.

As with many of the metal trades of the district, there are points of contact between all three industries, for brass is used both in the metallic bedstead trade and in the lock trade. There are likewise several processes of manufacture which are common to all three, particularly, stamping and pressing operations. From the point of view of structure, there are some resemblances between the industries as well, so that our combination of industries

does not after all appear so incongruous as at first it might. As for the fortunes of these industries and their relative importance, there are differences. The brass trades are old established trades in the district, and have always been expanding as the years rolled by. Of course, they have suffered from periods of depression, and the products of the industry as a whole have undergone some transformation, but new demands have constantly sprung up to revive any temporary drooping spirits and the industry has adapted itself to the newer developments. The metallic bedstead trade, on the other hand, is now not so important as it once was. Changing fashion has left its mark, and from the beginning of the twentieth century the industry has been steadily declining in importance. The lock and key trade is one which was expanding rapidly in the 'sixties and 'seventies of last century. It remained stationary for about twenty or thirty years, and then made some progress again in the present century. There have been more rapid changes in the organisation of this industry than in the other industries, old methods of working having survived for very many years before change set in. From the viewpoint of the character of the labour force, all three industries have witnessed changes, but the brass working trades and the lock and key trade have seen more than the bedstead trade.



The developments have been very similar in recent years in the brass trade and in the lock trade. Thus we have a combination of interesting circumstances which will certainly need consideration in the appropriate setting as we proceed on our course.

The actual course, however, has yet to be defined, so that before the reader embarks upon his way, it will be necessary to acquaint him with the main lines of direction. The following pages deal essentially with wages and labour organisation, and these have been studied, to a large extent, in relation to the general features of commercial organisation and of workshop routine. Definite correlations, however, have not been possible of achievement, because the data for such <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ inaccessible for the correlations that one would like to make. One feature stands out prominently, however; the small business unit has played an important part in the industrial life of the great Midland metropolis. Not only has it influenced the trades in their commercial aspects, but also in their labour problems. Not only has individualism been well embedded among employers in the trades of the district, but workmen also, as skilled craftsmen working on a payment by result basis, have tended to be individualistic as well. On occasions, a keenness of competition in business has had a very

marked effect on the wages of workmen in the trades of the locality. Generally, such effects have shown themselves in variations in piece work prices, and all the difficulties associated with piece work operation have been present. There have been accusations of "sweating", demands for a fair wage for a fair degree of skill, claims for the regulation of the flow of labour into the trades, attempts to combat cut-throat competition, maintenance of machinery for settling disputes and for bringing masters and men into closer contact, and devices for the protection of the piece worker. Yet collective bargaining between masters and men had not made much progress in pre war years in two out of the three industries with which we are concerned and in one branch of the third. In the brassworking trades collective bargaining had done much for the workers for many years before the Great War of 1914, and there had been fairly definite stages in the development. First of all, general percentage advances on earnings (fixed by individual bargain) at times when trade was on the up-grade; next endeavours to establish general minimum piece work price-lists in certain sections of the trade; thirdly the move for one recognized minimum rate of wages for all adult brassworkers, irrespective of ability and skill, and the establishment of such a minimum at a low enough figure to cover the least skilled hand; and finally,

a comprehensive grading of workmen according to occupation, ability and experience in their trade with recognised minimum rates of wages; all of these had taken place by 1910, and had been developing since 1872. But the progress made up to the beginning of the war had not been possible without organisation of both masters and men; neither would it have been possible without a spirit of conciliation. Furthermore, it would not have materialised unless the inherent individualism of the workers had not, to some extent, been overcome.

In spite of a workshop organisation which militated against solidarity, the difficulties had been overcome by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. But in the other trades, the stimulus of the war years was needed before very much headway was to be made, and before collective bargaining was to be able to boast of much success. When success did come, however, it came quickly, and at the present time, the metallic bedstead trade can boast of a general minimum piecework price list and minimum day work rates of wages and the lock and key trade can point to its elaborate grading scheme and minimum rates of wages. In some respects, these smaller trades have even overtaken and surpassed their older prototypes. In both of them collective negotiations have been undertaken for female as well as for male



workers, whereas females in the brass trades have gained nothing by organised effort. In the "heavy" primary branches of the brass trade, although minimum day work rates of wages have been established for certain classes of men, they compare unfavourably with those in the other branches and in other trades, and labour organisation is still in a backward condition.

There were indications that such labour organisations as existed in the backward trades were about to move forward in the immediate pre-war years, when the trade of the country was recovering from the lean time it had experienced in the first six or seven years of the century, but it is doubtful whether the advance afterwards would have been so rapid if the war had not intervened. War time movements in wages were extraordinary, and the emergency measures adopted resulted in all sorts of complications in the calculations of earnings and in shiftings in the relative positions of different grades of workers. The post war boom merely served to continue not only the upward trend of earnings but also the clumsy methods of manipulating wages movements. Thus, when the boom broke and it was found necessary to retrace steps to the normal condition of affairs, the way was found by no means easy. Various methods were adopted to accomplish what was thought to be a reversion to pre war conditions,

and it was some time before rates of wages assumed simpler forms. Even to-day in most trades, there is a bonus and a rate, whereas in the old days nothing but the rate counted. Where basis rates existed before the war, the opportunity was taken to get them increased, and where no such rates existed before the war, the opportunity was taken to get them established. The war-time influences then have left their imprint and have operated to alter the whole character of working conditions, especially as far as wages are concerned.

All of these features appear in our Birmingham metal trades, and are depicted in the ensuing chapters for the trades with which this work is intended to deal. In this connection, we should not omit to mention the machinery through which wages movements are effected. There was such machinery in existence before the war, but it was either new and stiff or suffered from want of lubrication. Immediate post war enthusiasm for organised collective bargaining has served to bring about a complete overhauling of the pre-existing equipment, and although designations may have been changed, actually the form of such machinery has not been very much remodelled. For such workers as may have suffered from lack of organisation, Trade Boards have been established, but the curious structure of the Birmingham metal trades has rendered overlapping unavoidable,



and we find the extraordinary condition of affairs in which a Trade Board legislates for classes of workers already covered by trade union voluntary agreements. Features of this nature have not been allowed to pass without adequate mention in the following account, neither have we forgotten to seek for any implications and effects arising from these newer methods of wages adjustments.

So, the work is largely historical and descriptive; it had of necessity to be such. The statistical aspects are far from satisfactory. The statistician needs to be a patient being, he is always in the annoying position of knowing what he wants without being able to satisfy his requirements. The results of his labours have always to be hedged with innumerable qualifications and reservations, which detract from the value of his work and rob it of finality. The statistician can scarcely ever be too sure of his ground, not that his method is wrong, not even that his tools are unsuitable; it is the material upon which he works which make for the inferior quality of his products. The statistician cannot afford to scamp over his work because he needs to be an adaptable and careful hand; but he is guaranteed no minimum reward for his exertions under existing conditions. No individuals can be blamed for such distressing circumstances, but it may be that conditions could be improved with a

trifle more championing of the statistician's cause. The fact is that people do not realise until too late how valuable may have been his aid. When he is called in, all clues may have vanished which would have assisted him in his search for solutions; no clues may even have been left. Existing clues may be blurred or misplaced; and most annoying of all, may be withheld. It may be that the statistician is an uninvited and inquisitive intruder, who steps where he wishes to tread himself, but upon ground regarded as barren or private by someone else, and in such unfavourable circumstances ~~that~~<sup>e</sup> statistician fails to take his rightful place alongside the theorist who lives half his time with his head up in the clouds and the historian who often never extricates himself from the more worldly array of past events and who frequently omits to carry induction to its logical conclusion.

Therefore, the reader of these pages must be patient too, for there will be many places in which he would care to see a quantitative measurement to support some bold assertion or unsubstantiated statement of fact. For instance, four questions are bound to linger on the lips of the careful reader :

- (1) Is the worker in the trades covered any 'better off' now than he was at some previous date? If so, by how much?
- (2) Has the size of the 'business unit' undergone any alteration over a period of years? If so,

can the extent of the change be measured?

- (3) Is there such a thing as a 'representative firm'? If so, can its size or efficiency be measured?
- (4) Has the number of 'business units' increased, decreased, or remained stationary over a period?

We should like to have answered all the four questions, and to have correlated the first with the other three, but the necessary clues escape our grasp. The historical material and descriptions have their interest, particularly in trades with so many complications as our metal trades, but they would have been even more interesting with quantitative supports. So history holds the premier place in this work. By this time, the reader's curiosity will have been aroused, and he is now left with just these few lines of directions in his mind to pick his way past the milestones of these pages.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Brass Trades of Birmingham and District.

- (1) The Structure of the Brass Trades.
- (11) The Sub-contracting System.

## CHAPTER 2.

### THE BRASS TRADES OF BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT.

#### (1) The Structure of the Brass Trades.

The city of Birmingham and the surrounding townships have been and probably always will be associated in the minds of business men, economic historians and the general public with the manufacture of all kinds of metal wares, not the least of which are the huge variety of articles made from brass. Few people really observe the extent to which we make use of this alloy in our daily round of life; yet we are constantly in contact with it. If we have not succumbed to the demands of fashion, we rise from our metallic bedstead every morning to be saluted with the shining brass bedstead mounts which ornament our bed-chamber. We draw our curtain across a brass cornice-pole; we press a brass switch to give us light on a winter's morning; we emerge from our room and turn a brass door-knob; and as we sing in our bath, we command the flow of water through brass taps. As we travel to the office by train or automobile this metal is our slave. We cannot fail to notice the railway-carriage fittings, but we may well be deceived by the highly polished plated parts of our automobile. The radiator, windscreen, door-handles and other fittings are none the less brass for being plated. The locomotive is perhaps more intriguing still in the manner in which it conceals its hundred-



and-one intricate steam-fittings and levers. In fact, the metal alloy is more useful than we generally realise it to be; or, as the writer has seen it written, the metal is in our presence when we come into the world, and it goes down to the soil with us when our mortal body departs for ever from the light of day. Nothing but a brass plate and brass handles will remain to guard the spot where we are interred. The general utility of the alloy is thus beyond dispute.

Subordinate to this feature of the alloy are its relations to changing habits and fashions, and the consequent variety of articles which are made from it; perhaps of greater importance still is the variety in design even with a single article. Boot-laces may supplant buckles, and the once flourishing buckle trade of Birmingham recedes into the limbo of a forgotten past. But the oil-burning lamp may oust the candlestick, gas brackets and burners in turn may take the place of oil lamps, and, finally, electric light fittings may encroach upon the domain of gas fittings; yet the brass trades still live on. Too much attention to these broad features need not be drawn in the present instance, although they must be borne in mind while the reader follows the course of the particular aspects of the brass trades with which the following pages intend to deal.

It is probably true to say that in any account of Birmingham and of its numerous industries, much space is devoted to describing the general features and sub-divisions of the

trades, and to outlining the changing fortunes of a particular trade, either from the point of view of the business man or from the point of view of the general public, but, curiously enough, little is ever known or divulged about the men and women who labour day after day in those trades, and upon whose skill and industry we have been dependent for the execution of the work. In order to fill the breach, it is, therefore, no part of the writer's intention to provide a complete history of the Birmingham brass trades, nor to give a very detailed account of the organisation of the trades or of its multifarious processes. He trusts, however, that the reader will find the history of labour organisation and of wage movements in the brass trades a sufficiently absorbing topic to compensate for any lack of detail in purely technical directions.

In tracing the origin of anything one must necessarily have a starting point, and that point should be most desirably the basic origin; but in the present case the writer is going to depart from the theoretically desirable to make a commencement about the middle of the nineteenth century. By that time, the brass trade - or, more correctly, brass trades - had developed into one of the four staple trades of Birmingham<sup>(1)</sup> and it was an expanding trade. Furthermore, in the brass trades as they existed in the 'fifties and 'sixties of last century, were to be determined the main sub-divisions of the

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(1) G.C. Allen: "Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country", p.

of the trade as these were later to become apparent. Perhaps the research worker can also legitimately claim that he is limited by his sources of material, and that some of the least easy features to tackle in the description of any trade are those concerning wages, workshop routine, and labour organisation. Let us first of all glance at the brass trades as they are now and as they were in 1850 or thereabouts, without enquiring too deeply into the question of how any condition had arisen; and let us commence by endeavouring to classify the trades from the point of view of product, without attempting to describe in detail the processes involved in the manufacture of such products.

There are, at the present time, broadly two main divisions of the trade, corresponding roughly to "heavy" semi-finished products, and lighter finished products. The former is concerned with the making of heavy metal ingots, with the rolling of sheets and bars, and with the drawing of rods, tubes, and wire; the latter with the more manipulative and mechanical operations required for the fashioning of the finished article. Although we must bear in mind this classification, especially in our treatment of our subject at a later stage in history, it is not quite correct to make such a clear-cut distinction for the middle of the nineteenth century, simply because what the writer has here called the



"heavy" section of the brass trades had then barely emerged as such. The brass trades really defy adequate and clear-cut classification, and even if we adopted the expedient of classifying into "brass-making" and "brass-working", the problem would still remain unsolved, for, unless we were careful, we should find ourselves dealing quite wrongly with the head-caster engaged in watching over his furnace and "making" metal for himself and his moulder to cast into small brasswares. For our present convenience, then, we must ignore to some extent the distinction between heavy or light, semi-finished or finished products, and concentrate upon three branches of the brass trades which are just as apparent to-day as they were in the fifties.

These would be -

- (1) General Brassfoundry or Cabinet Brassfoundry branch.
- (2) Chandelier and Gasfittings branch.
- (3) Water and Steam Fittings branch.

Such a classification would cover the main sections of the trades, and would account in 1850 for the greater part of the numbers employed in the brass trades. General or cabinet brassfoundry would refer to a tremendous variety of products used by carpenters, cabinet-makers, upholsterers and builders, such as coat-hangers, door-knobs, drawer handles, window fastenings and fittings, hinges, cornices,

stair rods and eyes, railway carriage fittings, castors, bolts, curtain rings, and so on. In the chandelier and gasfittings branch as it existed in 1850, it would be necessary to include the manufacture of candelabra and oil-lamps and burners, and perhaps also the manufacture of brass candlesticks. Later, of course, electric light fittings were to become as important as any product of this branch of the trade. The whole branch is sometimes referred to as the "lighting section". The third main section is the water and steam fittings branch, sometimes referred to as the "plumbing" section. It accounts for taps, valve cocks, water fittings of all kinds, beer engines, locomotive steam-fittings, and engineers' brassfoundry. Although, as can be seen, we have covered in this classification and enumeration such a huge range of products, it is equally clear that a very large number of articles would not fall within any of the categories enumerated. For instance, in 1850, there would be brass thimble makers, bedstead mount makers, fender and fire-brass makers, brass nail makers, mathematical instrument makers, bell-founders, military ornament makers, and brassworkers in art metal wares and in ecclesiastical brasswork. At the present time we have motor and cycle fittings, garden syringes and a host of other articles that are not provided for in the above list. Ammunition is a notable omission. So much for the products, in spite of the difficulties encountered in classification.

Well might the reader ask after that what type of work and what degree of skill is - or rather, was - required to produce so diverse a range of goods; and in giving answer, one must of necessity pay some attention to the processes of manufacture. In this connection it is well to remember the distinction, to which allusion has already been made, between metal-making and metal-working. The making of the alloy, that is, the creative process, is foundry work, copper and spelter being mixed in proportions depending upon the purpose for which the brass is intended. The alloy may be extracted from the furnace and poured into long rectangular moulds, that is, may be <sup>cast</sup> ~~cut~~ into ingots, these being later rolled into bars or sheets, or drawn out into rods from which, with the aid of stamps, presses, lathes and other mechanical appliances, the brasswares are fashioned. Or the alloy, in its molten state, may be extracted from the furnaces and poured into sand moulds which yield the articles in their rough state. In the second case the resulting castings have subsequently to be dressed and finished and made-up before the final product emerges. At some stage the finishing the wares will undergo cleaning (by dipping) and polishing, and finally they may be lacquered in order that they may present and maintain a bright surface in any colour according to the requirements of the market. Bronzing and plating are other processes which have become increasingly



popular, and the plating shop has, in recent times, become an important department in many brassworks. With these facts in mind, it is not difficult to visualise what type of labour supply is needed in the brass trades, nor to outline the main classes of occupations to be found therein. In the sand-casting shop, there is the head-caster, the moulder, together with perhaps a few labouring assistants. The head-caster is responsible for mixing the metals, looking after the furnace, and for determining the correct moment for pouring into the moulds. He also does pouring with the aid of the moulder, this being done from plumbago crucibles by which the metal is extracted from the furnace. The moulder makes the mould by filling the moulding box with sand around the pattern. The assistants would be needed in some casting shops for labouring work, such as carrying sand or moulding boxes, or for knocking off the gates<sup>(1)</sup> from castings after the moulding has been accomplished. Where hollow castings are produced, the coremaker is an important auxiliary to the casting shop. Coremakers are women workers and are found mainly in the water and steam fittings branch of the trade. It will be realised, of course, that the work done in the casting shop depends entirely on the skill of the pattern-maker, who in turn

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(1) The gates are the narrow connections made between one pattern and another in the mould so that the metal runs into all the impressions made by the patterns in the sand.



depends upon the ingenuity of the designer and modeller.

The caster in the "heavy" or "primary" branches of the trade who makes ingots is called a strip-caster. He is assisted in the casting shop by pourers and labourers.

In the rolling mill and the tube mill there are rollers, furnace-men, annealers, shearers, picklers, straighteners and various other workers who may be regarded as helpers. The work in the mills is not, on the whole, of a highly skilled character, and contrasts in this respect with work of operatives in the finishing sections of the trade. The finishing processes include, amongst others, dressing the rough castings, turning, screwing, drilling, countersinking, metal-spinning, burnishing, polishing, fitting, and making-up. In the modern brassworks there will be large numbers of semi-skilled and unskilled machine-hands operating capstan and turret lathes, together with stampers, piercers and pressworkers. The machine shop in such works presents no different appearance from that to be found in any engineering establishment, and milling, shaping, slotting and boring machines will be operated by unskilled machine-tool workers, many of them young boys and women and girls. We should not omit the dippers who dip the brasswares into a mixture of acids to remove scale and dirt, and the bronzers who form now an important occupational class. Then again, there are female lacquerers, besides warehouse hands employed in wrapping and packing.

This is a long list of occupations, though not

exhaustive, and the reader will be prepared for complications. There are certainly many in store for him. It must not be imagined that the division of labour in the fifties corresponded with this lengthy enumeration of processes. In the first place, it must be remembered that strip-casting and rolling, and the stamping and pressing operations which followed from them in the finishing sections, were at that time in their infancy, as most brasswares were cast in those days. Furthermore, burnishing was of far greater importance than polishing, particularly with the more highly ornamental wares of that period. Again, in the finishing sections, individual specialisation, or process work as it is sometimes called, was practically non-existent. A brassworker, if he valued his name as such was not a lathe-hand, nor a vice-hand, nor a maker-up; he was all of these, or if not all in his younger days, he was expected to become such an expert at all kinds of vice and lathe work as he grew up in the trade. In the main, there were three departments: casting, dressing (1) and polishing. There was no elaborate machine-shop, with its fool proof lathes for turning and screwing, and its automatic machines for piercing, cutting, countersinking and so on. The brassworker made his own hand-tools, and his lathe was of the primitive treadle variety. There is not perhaps as much difference as that between the sand-caster of to-day, and the

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(1) Dressing is meant to include here filing, turning, screwing, &c. and final making-up.

and the caster of the fifties. The casting-shop itself would present a different aspect, because the administrative Orders of the Home Office have stepped in to make the caster's work place more healthy and congenial. Casting is a "dangerous" occupation prejudicial to health on account of the white zinc oxide fumes (called "sulphur" by the caster) which hang about the shop. Various approved methods of exhaust have now to be provided in the casting shop, a certain amount of cubic space per worker is required as a minimum standard, and washing facilities must be provided also. In the old days, it was quite usual for the women coremakers to work in the casting shop, but such is now prohibited. Very young boys were likewise employed in the casting shops in the 'fifties and 'sixties, but they went out before the women coremakers. Apart from these Home Office regulations, it is only in comparatively recent years that changes in methods of production have altered the work of the sand-casting shop. Plate-moulding and later machine-moulding have been introduced within the last twenty years, mainly for work in which large numbers of standardized castings are required. With plate-moulding, instead of the patterns being placed by hand individually in the mould, they are affixed to a steel plate, which when placed in the moulding-box yields the moulds much more quickly. The moulder is still required, with this method, to press the sand into the moulding-box by hand. But even this is dispensed with in the case of machine moulding. Plates with patterns are used as for ordinary plate-moulding,



but the moulding-boxes are filled by machinery, and all that the machine-moulder has to do is to see that the machine is fed with sand and moulding-boxes. There are three or four types of machine-moulding plant, but as in the case of plate-moulding the method is best adapted for producing symmetrical castings. The quality of the work done suffers often, because "blow-Holes" are likely to form in the casting if the sand in the moulding-box is not packed properly. That is where the skill of the moulder is missed. All three methods of moulding exist side by side in the brass trades to-day. Where electric furnaces have been introduced, the skill required by the strip-caster is not so high, because various devices are available to inform him with regard to temperature and the <sup>correct</sup> ~~moment~~ <sup>moment</sup> for pouring. (1) Since the fifties and sixties of last century, many changes have taken place in all sections of the brass trades, both in methods of production and in the organisation of the workshops, so that much less skill is required of the average brassworker to-day.

But although this is the merest platitude to point to the fact that vast changes have taken place, and to observe that the brass trades are not as they were, and to lament that the brassworker of to-day is not the skilled mechanic that his ancestor was, one cannot point to any definite period of time when any wholesale revolution has occurred. Changes have taken place gradually, the old often surviving for many years

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(1) The Witten Book of Non-Ferrous Metals, p.6.



alongside the new. In describing certain conditions which obtained at the beginning of the present century one might well be talking of the middle of the last century. This is particularly the case in such matters as workshop organisation and recruiting of labour in the trade. The "journeyman" system was almost as firmly established in 1900 as it was in 1850. The method of paying wages was generally just the same at the later date as in the fifties, although there were indications that changes were bound to take place after 1900. Since that date, changes have been much more rapid, particularly in respect to trade union organisation. Compared with other metal-working trades in the Birmingham district, brassworkers in the finishing sections have been well served in this latter direction, from the seventies onwards. The trade union has had many difficulties to face in its struggle for better conditions in the trade, not the least of which have been the "journeyman" system itself and the great diversity of skill which was bound to manifest itself among the workers in the several branches of a trade of so much variety.

Industrial organisation in the trade also presents many interesting features from the point of view of size, structure and marketing, but in the ensuing pages these are only to be treated in their relationship to wage movements and labour organisation. All that need be stressed again at this stage is the distinction between non-ferrous metal manufacturing from which the semi-finished products emerge, and metal working, or the production of finished brasswares. Firms

engaged in producing sheets, bars and rods find their market in the firms turning out the finished products. In so far as a considerable amount of work done by the latter is in sand-castings, they do not obtain the whole of their materials from the metal manufacturing firms. These two types of firms are, on the whole, quite distinct, and form as it were two trades, one of which is to a large extent the complement of the other. A minority of the metal manufacturing firms also take up finishing work, but it is not usually done. Among the firms in the "heavy" department, some specialise in tubes, some in wire, some in rods and so on, but this is not usual either, except perhaps in the case of brass and copper tubes. There is one large firm which produces sheet brass, bars, extruded rods, wire and tubes. In the finishing branch, the various sections are to some extent distinct, but firms in this case often engage in more than one branch of the trade and it is not uncommon to find a firm producing gas and electric light fittings, water and steam fittings as well as cabinet fittings or any other articles of general brassfoundry. There is one very old-established firm in the locality which engages in cabinet and naval brassfoundry, art metals and ecclesiastical work, as well as in brass and copper tubes. Another prominent local firm makes lighting fittings, water and steam fittings, cabinet fittings, as well as brass tubes and bedsteads. Yet another may combine gas and electric light fittings with brassware for motor cars and motor cycles. The reader should beware of the general term "brassfounder". Strictly speaking,

no firm should so describe itself unless it has its casting shop, but the practice had developed of styling any firm having any connection with brassworking a "brassfounder's" business. Thus there are, according to the Directory<sup>(1)</sup>, 197 "brassfounders" in Birmingham and Smethwick, apart from the hundreds of firms in the brass trades given under other headings. The 197 firms include at least 3 plumbers' brassfounders, 1 brass caster, 5 brass or copper tube makers, 1 candlestick maker, 1 bedstead mount maker, 3 hinge-makers and so on. A number of them would only be engaged on stamped brasswares even.

There is a certain amount of specialisation by process or stage of manufacture, technically termed differentiation. This is chiefly the case in the newer developments of stamping, piercing and pressing. There are scores of firms producing stamped or pressed articles "for the trade", that is, articles which form part of a composite product. There have always been "out-casters" in the trade, and similarly there are to be found "out-polishers", "out-platers", "out-engravers" and so forth, but whereas stampers and piercers would seem to have been increasing in number, there has been a decline in the numbers of other specialists.

The above description of the branches of the brass trade, the structure of the trade and the processes of

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(1) Kelly's Directory - Birmingham and Smethwick, 1929.

manufacture within the several branches has been a necessary preliminary to an understanding of wages problems and wages movements. But before proceeding to trace these movements, one must thoroughly grasp the implications of the "journeyman" or "sub-contracting" system, because it was at the bottom of many of the problems encountered by the trade union in its struggles for better working conditions. Therefore, the writer offers no apology for next describing this peculiar type of workshop organisation as it existed in the brass trades, and for allowing such account to precede that of the development of collective bargaining and trade union organisation.



(11) The Sub-contracting System. (1)

The brass trades, like so many other metal-working trades, have always been trades in which payment for work done is by the piece and one would consequently expect to find therein all the wages problems that one has grown accustomed to associate with piece-work operation. But the difficulties have been accentuated by the persistence of the sub-contracting system in the brass shops. It has been pointed out (2) that this system, the significance of which seems to have escaped our economic historians, has marked a stage in the transition from domestic workshops conditions to modern factory production. It represented a survival of traditional methods of working in a gradually changing industrial setting. In fact, so long did it survive and with so little modification, that one may describe the system as it existed in 1900 and at the same time be portraying it as it always had existed. The main features of this system, which may be called either 'journeyman', 'sub-contracting' or 'gang' system, have been outlined by a competent economic historian (3) but there are still some facts to be supplied. If much is repeated in these pages, it will be appreciated that such repetition is rather necessary if methods of paying and adjusting wages in the brass trades are to be fully understood. The basic

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- (1) Most of the facts contained in this chapter have been gleaned from the Report of the Brass Trades Arbitration of 1900, although other sources, which will be indicated, have also been drawn upon.  
 (2) G. C. Allen. Op. cit.  
 (3) Ibid.

feature of the system was the double wage-contract that it involved, with a resulting combination of piece-work and day-work rates. For example, the head-caster was paid so much per hundredweight for the castings made by himself, with the assistance of his moulders, whom he not only engaged and supervised but also paid at the end of the week. Similarly, in the finishing and polishing shops, the journeyman or foreman hired the necessary labour supply, whether men, youths or boys; and he entered into a contract with the master, usually a verbal one, to be responsible for the making, with the aid of his "team", of a certain number of given articles at a certain piece-work price. At the time of his engagement the underhand would have bargained with the foreman (1) for a certain weekly rate of wages and this wage would be paid to him by the journeyman out of the total proceeds credited by the office to the journeyman for the amount of work performed. The employer in such circumstances would be completely ignorant of the amounts of wages received by the underhands, or of the total number of hands employed on his premises. The underhands were employed by the journeyman at day-work rates and the journeymen were employed on a "payment by result" basis by the employers.

Those were the main features of the system as it had grown up, not only in the brass trades but also in many others in Birmingham and the Black Country. Such method of labour recruitment and supervision had developed in the

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(1) The words "foreman"; "journeyman"; "piece-master" are interchangeable.

heavier metal industries of Birmingham and the Black Country, as well as in the lighter trades where a high degree of individual manual dexterity was required. At the blast-furnace, the bridge-stocker usually employed the boys and youths who were engaged as box-fillers; in the mills and forges, the forehand puddler engaged and paid his underhands, as did the shingler also. The ~~matter~~ <sup>latter</sup> engaged boys as "staff-carriers", whose duty it was to heat the rods, which were welded to the lump of iron in order that the iron may be more easily moved about and to carry these rods to him. In the rolling-mill, the head-roller was able to obtain fairly substantial remuneration after paying his underhands out of the contract price that he received from the iron-masters for his output. In the tube-mills, the work was done under a similar type of contract, the forehand engaging those who helped at the draw-bench. The heavy-anchorsmiths were likewise served by their "gangs", which usually consisted of five underhands. In the large chainworks and in the iron foundries the employer was similarly removed from the bulk of those who laboured on his premises, his managerial functions were reduced to a minimum and the degree of control ~~he~~ exercised over the conduct and discipline of his workmen was small indeed. There were to be found women "piece-masters" as well as men, mainly in those trades which offered opportunities for female labour, such as in the button-making trade, the papier-mache trade and in the lacquering shops of the brass trades. There were instances in which large numbers of women and girls, engaged in



operating semi-automatic machines, were supervised by a male fitter, who contracted with the master to get the work done. The best example of this was in the manufacture of machine-made nails and washers, such work usually being done in fairly large establishments. This fitter not only acted as manager, but also hired the hands, superintended the work and was responsible for setting-up and cleaning the machinery. One might contrast this condition of affairs with that in the steel pen trade, where females were employed in fairly extensive factories in operating hand-presses and semi-automatic machines, under the direction of a male "tool-maker." In this trade, the tool-maker was responsible for the setting-up of the machines, but the system of sub-contracting was not admitted. In spite of this exception - and the steel pen trade was exceptional in more ways than one - it is clear that the sub-contracting system as it existed in the brass trades, was a representative feature of industrial organization as it had developed in the district.

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The development was doubtless a natural one in Birmingham, where few signs of anything approaching a factory system were to be found among its industries in the middle of the XIXth century. The system, as will be seen, was not confined to the smaller establishments in Birmingham but was also part and parcel of routine in the larger works of the Black Country. In the brass trades itself, if sub-contracting was the order in the smaller workshops, it was equally so in

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(1) This paragraph has been built up mainly from the evidence given in the third report of the Children's employment Comm. 1864.



the few larger establishments where an enterprising employer may have embarked upon more than one branch of the trade. In a trade where apprenticeship was the exception and not the rule, the system was accepted as the natural condition in the labour market. That a boy should be employed as an underhand assisting a journeyman and that he should thus learn his trade under the direct guidance and supervision of that journeyman was the normal method of making a start in any trade of the district. Exceptions to this mode of entry into a trade were to be found in the lock and key trade of Willenhall and Wolverhampton and <sup>in</sup> the flint-glass trade of Birmingham and Stourbridge. In the former a boy was apprenticed to his trade in a small workshop and in the latter a powerful trade union jealously guarded and regulated entry into and promotion within the trade. No-one would have dreamed of suggesting that there should have been any other system than sub-contracting. According to one manufacturer in the lamp and chandelier trade in 1850, the "gang" system was the only satisfactory one in a large establishment, on account of the infinite variety of work required to make a lamp; there might have been a score of men occupied on different parts of one lamp-burner and the work was facilitated by being placed under the supervision of one person. (1) This evidence scarcely presents a very adequate case in support of the system because the supervising person need not also have hired the hands and fixed their rates of remuneration. It would

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(1) "Labour and the Poor" - Morning Chronicle. Letter No. XII. January 6th, 1851.

would have been easy for any employer to testify as to the advantages of the journeyman system and at the same time equally not difficult for any impartial observer to heap up arguments on the opposite side.

Under such a scheme, many of the problems which confront the modern works' manager, never troubled the management in those days. If a manufacturer were asked to quote his price for making any particular article, his total labour cost was easy to ascertain. If it were a standard product in his catalogue, then he knew what was the customary piece-work price he would pay any of his foremen for making the necessary quantity of it; if it were an article of new design, he merely had to strike a bargain as to the price with one of his journeymen, or pit one journeyman against another. Costing was simple as far as direct labour cost and cost of direct materials was concerned. The employer did not require a large office staff, neither had he any concern with the management of the men working on his premises. There was every inducement for a foreman to get the work done quickly, thereby effecting savings in overhead charges. Further savings would result also from the fact that the journeymen in some instances provided their own tools and materials and would thus tend to exercise more care in their use. These were all very laudable reasons why an employer should not find fault with such a system.

On the other hand, although it was many years before an attack was launched against the system from the workmen's point of view, there were several aspects of such

an arrangement which were undesirable and unsatisfactory. The system promoted and maintained a keen sense of individualism among the skilled hands which rendered it difficult to stimulate any measure of solidarity. Each journeyman took pride in his own skill and ability (in itself, not an undesirable feature) but nurtured his own interests, regardless of those of his fellows. Often an employer would pit one journeyman against another in bargaining for a piece price, especially in times of a declining trade and excessive competition among manufacturers. Not only did these circumstances operate to keep down the journeymen's piecework prices but they also led to a forcing down of the wages of underhands. If an employer was finding it difficult to place any line of goods on the market at what he considered a remunerative price, then he could go to his journeyman and inform him that his shop was not "paying" and that he must accept a lower price. If the journeyman raised protest, it was always possible for the master to suggest that he <sup>h</sup>ould engage cheaper labour. The manufacturer stood to suffer though, because the cheapest labour is not necessarily the best in the long run. It must be remembered that the labour <sup>market</sup> in the brass trades was an open one and labour was fairly mobile, notable with the younger hands and there was never much difficulty in securing the services of some sort of workman. If a journeyman found disfavour in the sight of his employer and reaped dismissal, he stood a poor chance of obtaining employment elsewhere in the capacity of a journeyman but he could help to swell the ranks of the underhands



and endeavour to get a job under a journeyman. This is borne out by the evidence of a workman given in 1900 : "First of all in Birmingham, you go to the office - they tell you that they do not want a journeyman. Then you go to the gates - they will send down a journeyman; he says he wants an underhand. When you see him, the appearance is enough - you don't want to ask for the job." (1) This piece of complimentary evidence was supplied by a journeyman!

To some extent, the sub-contracting system may have been held responsible for overstocking the labour market (2) because it was only in times of general trade activity that a journeyman encountered difficulty in discovering a sufficient supply of underhand labour. But other factors contributed to this state of affairs, not least of which was the existence of other metal-working trades in the district and it is only reasonable to recognise that there would still have been a reserve of labour under any other method of recruitment and entry. In Birmingham there were many metal-working operations, such as lathe-work and vice-work, which were common to many trades in the locality and young underhands were not only free to move from one brass works to another, but they might also be able to move just as easily out of the brass trades into some other trade where they could be similarly occupied. Rates of wages would in such circumstances have great influence on the migration of

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(1) "Brass Trades Arbitration", 1900. Fourth Day. p.69.

(2) Complaint frequently echoed in "Annual Reports" of the Brassworkers' Society.



labour between such metal working trades and, conversely, such migration would influence wages. It is a well-known fact that with the advent of the cycle trade in the Birmingham district, many brass polishers migrated from the brass trades to the newly-developing cycle trade; and when one reflects that the latter was a trade subject to seasonable demands, one can imagine the effect on wages of underhands when, during slack periods, labour would flow back and compete with labour still attached to the brass trades. It was quite a common experience for a boy to make a start in one trade, such as action-filing at the vice in the gun trade and to move out into some other metal-working trade like the brass trades, in which, if he could file flat and true, his services may be required by some busy journeyman. All these factors, making for a free, open and well-stocked labour market, combined with the journeyman system in fostering a great degree of keenness in the striking of wage bargains in the trade. Under such conditions, the men who were unfortunately out of employment exercised a great deal of influence on the wages of those who were in employment.

Generally, it would be true to say that those conditions pressed most heavily on the underhands. The wages he could command were naturally dependent upon conditions of trade and conditions of employment, but the skill and general capacity of the underhand had some weight in the matter. If he were not a quick and skilful worker, the journeyman<sup>was</sup> no different from any employer in noticing this fact in being unwilling to pay well for his services. Most

their trade, even under a journeyman and there is no reason to suppose that under any other system, such as under the more modern foreman or <sup>chargehand</sup> ~~underhand~~ systems which have developed out of the journeyman arrangement, a workman is instructed any more thoroughly in his trade. It is not easy to adjudicate upon this question, as so much depended upon the journeyman himself, upon the number of underhands he employed and upon the type of work upon which he was usually engaged.

(1) In the brassfinishing shop of the old days, the young underhand was started at the menial task of edging and filing at the vice and would do light labouring work, would carry tools and goods about the shop, would sweep out the shop and perform all odd jobs of that kind. He would pick up his trade as best he could and would try his hand at the lathe whenever he had the chance. He was not kept at one monotonous process as became the rule later on and he probably had a better chance of learning every aspect of his trade, because he could move more freely about the shop to view the different processes of finishing and making-up. In 1914, for example, when the journeyman system was not such an established feature in the brass shops, it was complained that boys were put at one process for a start and kept at this monotonous task without being given the opportunity to learn another sub-process. (2) In any case, there was bound to be

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- (1) In larger establishments, where several lines of goods were manufactured and where there would be an infinite variety of designs, journeymen would specialise in certain lines.
  - (2) R. S. Smirke - Report to the Juvenile Employment Exchange on Juvenile Employment in the Brass Trades, 1914.

a tremendous range of skill from top to bottom in the trade and all journeymen were not alike in the manner in which they treated their underhands. It behoved a journeyman to give his hands the best possible chance to learn the various branches of work, since the more experienced were the workers the better was the quality of the workmanship. A journeyman who could turn out good stuff was far more likely to find favour with his master and was also in a better bargaining position. A witness at an arbitration in 1907 summed up this matter when his evidence showed that whether a man was a qualified workman in all branches of the trade at the age of twenty-one depended upon what opportunity he had been given of learning the various sections of the trade between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one. He may have been kept at edging and filing or he may have learnt also trimming, screwing and plugging. (1) It is correct to surmise that in the early part of the period with which we are dealing, the chance of becoming an all-round skilled hand was greater than at a later period when more elaborate and better equipped machinery was to diminish the skill required of the brassworkers and when process-work was to necessitate a greater measure of specialisation. A brassworker may or may not have become a fully qualified workman at the age of twenty-one. Such would depend entirely on the manner in which the work in the shop in which he was engaged was organised. Between the age of fourteen and the age of twenty-one, an underhand may have moved about from one works to another, out of one section of the

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(1) Brass Trades Arbitration 1907. Report pp 20-25. First Day.



trade into another and in that way he would have added to his experience and qualifications. This fact, that the range of skill was a very wide one, was of great significance in collective wages negotiations in the trade after 1900 but although some may have alleged that the "journeyman" system was responsible, the writer prefers to return an open verdict on the subject.

Yet another feature of the system which tends to attract our sympathies towards the underhands rather than to the journeyman was the temptation put in the way of a piece-master to drive a hard bargain with his underhands and reap a substantial gain himself. There was often great disparity between the "profit" of the journeyman and the earnings of any one of the underhands. The employer was fond of pointing to this fact whenever accusations of "sweating" were levelled at him. There is nothing to be said against the journeyman's higher remuneration, although one might well question the justice of the magnitude of the difference between that and the wages of the underhands. The journeyman was an expert in his branch of the trade, highly skilled and fully qualified to undertake any work that was put before him: his functions were several, not the least of which was his sole responsibility for organising the work of the shop and getting it done efficiently by his team. He forged his own tools, ground and hardened them and he saw to it that his lathe or his spindles (if he were a polisher) were kept in proper order.



His duties and qualifications extended further than a thorough knowledge of manual operations, for he was required in some instances to have a knowledge of working drawings and some part of his time was taken up in looking up patterns and in booking the work done. He was in turn supervisor, instructor, tool-maker, tool-setter and all-round workman. There was much to be said then for his better wage but when a worker of that kind was enabled to take home as much as ten pounds while his underhands may only have received a paltry twenty-four or twenty-five shillings, our sympathies are bound to turn against him and we are led to denounce the whole system

The system, however, sometimes operated against the journeyman himself because he was not always in a strong bargaining position. It has already been noted that the journeyman entered into a contract with the master in regard the price he was to be paid for getting certain work done; the journeyman, as we have seen, could engage as many underhands as he considered necessary and could pay them what he wished. Each of his underhands would be rated at a certain weekly figure and at the end of the week, they would receive their wage from the journeyman, who had received a lump sum in a bag from the office, this being the total proceeds at the contracted piece-work price. After <sup>paying</sup> his underhands, the journeyman pocketed the "profit". But sometimes the contract could <sup>be</sup> not be completed within a week and in such cases, the foreman would have to "draw" upon the employer for the weekly wages of himself and underhands, the final settlement being effected on

"balancing" Saturday when the work had been completed. (1)

On occasions, a journeyman found at this date that he had received more in "drawings" than was represented by the work turned out and in such circumstances would be indebted to the firm. Cases had~~been~~<sup>e</sup> known of journeyman having nothing left to take home at the end of the week. This state of affairs went by the name of "Round O's" in the trade; but it was not a frequent occurrence. (2) When a journeyman built up a debt of this kind, he would subsequently have to liquidate it at so much per week and thus inroads were made upon his future earnings. In case there is any doubt in the minds of the reader as to the real meaning of this indebtedness, the following questions and answers taken from the report of an arbitration in 1900, when the Arbitrator himself was anxious to understand the full implication of such a condition of affairs, will prove illuminating :

(3)

"Q. (Arbitrator). You say you are rated at 35s. ?

A. (Journeyman). Yes.

Q. And your underhand at 28s ?

A. Yes.

Q. And a boy at - ?

A. Nine shillings.

Q. Therefore under ordinary circumstances, when you commence piece-work, you would now expect to receive on each Saturday till the balancing Saturday came, 35s., 28s. and 9s. and then when the balancing Saturday came, an account would be struck of what you had received for yourself, your underhand and boy during the

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- (1) A journeyman might sometimes have carried out more than one contract before "balancing". He may have had several jobs going through the shop at a time.  
 (2) Brass Trades Arbitration, 1900. Report p 92. Second Day.  
 (3) This would be the journeyman's own weekly rate for the purposes of the draw.

currency of this work, whereas the work itself at the fixed work price being of such a total value, you would be in debt to them or they to you ?

A.

Yes.

Q.

And if you were in debt to them, then you say you would have to begin to liquidate it in some way or other ?

A.

Yes, that is what I am doing at the present time. "

(1)

This particular man was liquidating his debt at the rate of 2s. 6d. per week; hence, for all practical purposes, his rating was 32s. 6d. instead of 35s. He admitted that only once during the four years that he had been in the employ of that particular firm had he gone home without any wages. The writer does not wish to make out that journeymen in the brass trades were generally so poorly-off but it would seem that the practise of getting into debt with the firm was most common in the cabinet brass foundry branch of the trade. Cases were known where the debt of a single journeyman outstanding at any particular date amounted to as much as £150 or £200 and one case was cited in which four men between them owed £1000.

(2) In such instances, the journeyman was at the mercy of the management; he was "tied" and his bargaining position was considerably weakened.

Any blame might be apportioned between both parties to the contract. Not only might piece-work prices be unduly low - and one expected this in the cabinet branch of the trade, where the employer was more exposed to

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(1) Arbitration 1900 Report. pp 83 - 84. Second Day.

(2) Arbitration 1900. Report. p 43. Third Day.



to competition from small "garret-masters" - but the journeyman himself might be unduly generous in rating his underhands. Another anomaly to which the journeyman was sometimes <sup>b</sup>subject was the competition from workmen in the day-work shops. The lack of a sense of solidarity has already been noted, so that one may well understand why a master, if he could not get his journeyman to accept a proposed piece-work price would threaten to give the work over to the day-workers, where these were employed and rely on extra supervision and drive to get the contract through. (1) Here, the writer prefers to think that such a practice<sup>c</sup> was the exception rather than the rule. There was no complaint against day-work, the workmen were prepared to tolerate either day-work or piece-work, but they preferred it to be all one or all the other and not both in the same establishment. The employer generally preferred piecework, because he thought he got more work done in a given time. (2)

Such were the main features of the sub-contracting system, but before closing this account, the writer wishes to point out some of the variations of the system which were found in some establishments. He must also correct an impression which he may have given that the teams of underhands consisted always of fairly young men who were exploited by unscrupulous journeymen. Promotion to the position of

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- (1) Annual Reports, Brassworkers Society 1874 - 75.
  - (2) In this connection, an underhand, although paid a day-work rate, would be regarded as a piece-worker. Day-work shop refers to a factory where there were day-work journeymen as well as piece-workers.



journeyman was not automatic and was not easily obtained. There was no such thing as an apprenticeship upon the expiry of which a worker became a journeyman. The opportunities for becoming a journeyman were by no means plentiful. It was quite usual for a son to be employed under his father, and he would naturally be in a more favourable position than the other underhands; he tended to step into his father's shoes. Some underhands even never had the inclination to become journeymen. So it was that a man may have been twenty or thirty years in the brass trades and still remain an underhand. He may never have had the chance to become a journeyman, although quite competent to take out work and finish it and superintend a shop. (1) There was a case cited in the arbitration of 1900 where a journeyman, aged 56, employed five assistants; two of these had been employed in the trade for about thirty years, one being forty years of age and another underhand had been working in the trade for about twenty-four years. (2)

Sometimes, by way of variation, a piece-master would sub-contract further with his underhands and put them on piece-work. Although this complicated the method of working it was probably more equitable and gave the underhand some inducement and encouragement. At times, when there seemed no express desire to interfere with what was accepted as an established institution in the trade, it had been

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(1) "Pictures of the People" No. X. "Morning News". July 31st 1871.  
 (2) Arbitration 1900. Report pp 41, 42, 43. Third Day.

suggested from the employer's side that the underhands might be given an interest in some way in the "profits" of the journeymen. (1) It is doubtful whether many journeymen would have jumped at such a suggestion. It was not unknown for a journeyman who required another assistant to borrow the services of an underhand employed by another journeyman in the same works, and he would then pay the wage at which the underhand was already rated by the other journeyman. Yet another variation was for two journeymen to enter into a partnership on a contract which was to be spread over a fairly long period of time, and they would then share the accruing "profits" when the work was completed. Three cases were mentioned for one works in 1900, where such partnerships existed in leaf-beating, making-up and polishing departments, where the combined teams consisted respectively of twelve, eighteen and thirty-one underhands. (2) There was no regulation with regard to the number of underhands a journeyman could employ. (3) This number would depend on the state of trade and on the nature of the work done. In the case of casters, the number would depend on the number of "tubs" for which the foreman caster was responsible. In a large works, this number of "tubs" was usually two or three and then the number of underhands engaged in looking after one or other of the "tubs", making moulds, pouring and general labouring

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(1) Arbitration 1900. Report p 64. Eighth Day.

(2) Ibid. pp 65 - 66. Eighth Day.

(3) See Chapter 3 (i) p. 62 & p. 67. for regulation in one small section of the trade.

work may have amounted to as many as ten. It is impossible to generalise about this matter of the number of underhands per journeyman; <sup>in</sup> the smaller works, which survived side by side with the larger establishments, the foreman could carry on with the assistance of two, three or four underhands, sometimes with just one boy, whereas ten, twelve or as many as twenty might be found in the expanding or larger establishment under one journeyman. As a particular business developed, in size, not only would the number of journeymen increase but the journeymen themselves would find it necessary to take on extra ~~labour~~ hands. The only regulations which attached to the employment of underhands were those contained in the rules of the Brassworkers' Society and these were rules which hardly affected the employer and which were not likely to have much influence on the organisation of the workshop or on the cost of production. One rule related to the employment of an underhand who had left another journeyman in a dishonourable manner, so that he had not received a "character". In this case, a journeyman member of the Society was not to employ such an underhand without the consent of his former master. Another rule provided that no journeyman member of the Society was to take into his employment an underhand who was in the employ of another journeyman in the same factory, within six months of the first employment of that underhand, unless the consent of the other journeyman were obtained. (1)

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(1) Copies of former rules of Brassworkers' Society in the Webb Collection at the British Library of Economics and Political Science.



In the 'fifties and 'sixties, there was probably a greater degree of superiority attaching to the position of journeyman. The journeyman had just been a highly-skilled and all-round craftsman, who found that by engaging boys and youths to perform the more menial tasks he could enhance his own earnings. Thus, in reading accounts of the trades of Birmingham as they were in 1850, we find it stated that a man in the cabinet branch could earn when working single-handed 20s. to 24s., with the aid of two or three boys under him 6s. or 7s. more, and with six underhands 35s. to 50s. a week. (1) Because the system of payment was a piecework bargain between a master and a skilled craftsman, the journeyman system became an established institution in the trade. As firms grew in size, these skilled craftsmen retained their power to engage whatever labour was necessary. The development would seem to have been from the domestic workshop, in which the members of a family assisted in the work, to the small workshop where outside labour was brought in; from that to the small factory in which the skilled craftsman was still responsible for all manual work and produced the finished article through its various processes. Finally as the smaller establishment developed, the journeyman system survived. It is difficult to say why the system survived; one might just as well ask why any <sup>custom</sup> ~~society~~ survives. It may be that the pride attaching to the position of a "boss" or the superiority complex of the craftsman in "the know" were reasons why it should not have

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(1) "Labour and the Poor". Op. cit.



disappeared sooner. The capitalist employer said to his journeyman, as it were, "You supply the labour (and sometimes also the small tools and incidental materials). I will supply the premises, equipment and prime materials. You may put in as much labour as you like, <sup>you may get as many others to assist you as you like,</sup> and I will pay you so much for the finished goods." As has already been pointed out, the system was as firmly rooted in 1900 as at any other time, although <sup>h</sup>there were factories at this date in which the underhand, though still rated by the foreman or charge-hand, was paid direct from the office. There were other cases also at this date in which the management entered into a piecework bargain with each brassworker, especially in works where sub-division of labour had proceeded at a rapid pace and workers were not all-round men capable of finishing out-right. In some establishments, the work was all done on a day-work basis. Workers may have changed over from day-work to piece-work or vice versa and back again later to their original method of working. Where brassworkers were engaged in the brass-finishing shops attached to engineering works, they were usually day-workers. On the whole, however, the journeyman system was still the most usual mode of operation.

Throughout the nineties, opinion among leaders of organised labour in the trade was gradually crystallising against the powers and privileges enjoyed by the journeyman<sup>e</sup>, notably against their unregulated control of the flow of labour into the trade. The Brassworkers' Society had been in existence since 1872 but had done nothing to assist in breaking up the system. For having tolerated the system

without attempting to eradicate it, the Society had been criticised by other organised bodies, especially by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. It had been said that the Society was not imbued with the true spirit of trade unionism, since it allowed its journeyman members to gain at the expense of fellow-members. (1) But this system was too firmly established, and for the union to have attempted to break it up might well have brought disaster upon itself. Tradition was hard to wear down and although one of the aims of the trade union in its Minimum Rate Agitation of 1900 (2) was to lay down a maximum number of underhands per journeyman as a working condition in the trade, it is extremely problematical how far such a proposed regulation claimed the whole-hearted support of the journeyman class. During ~~the~~ arbitration proceedings in 1900, the eyes of some of the more enlightened masters may have been opened and the dangers of such a system were to a large extent made manifest. But the system did not pass away rapidly; in fact it still exists today in some<sup>e</sup> works. Usually, the head-caster still pays his moulder out of the piecework earnings for his castings and in the finishing shops there are still traces of it. Just after the closing<sup>e</sup> of <sup>the</sup> war, the trade union officials were called upon to investigate complaints arising from journeymen employed by one of the largest and oldest firms in the district. Under the various measures adopted during the war, by which

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(1) Webb manuscripts at the British Library of Economics and Political Science.

(2) See Chapter 5.

most of the wage increases took the form of flat-rate advances, (1) the lower grades of workmen received proportionately bigger additions to their <sup>weekly</sup> incomes than did the higher grades. Thus, we find complaints from ~~the~~ journeymen in <sup>this</sup> ~~their~~ particular establishment that <sup>they</sup> ~~had~~ suffered because underhand labour had been scarce, because advances had been mainly on a flat-rate basis and because piece-work prices had not been revised to compensate the journeymen for the increased wages bill of their underhands. (2) In recent years, however, the employers' association has recommended that the system should be discontinued, or at least modified, so that all men are paid from the office. Thus, the old type of journeyman is now disappearing and the foreman or charge-hand is taking his place. The foreman may still have to organise the work of his shop, he may still have something to do with the taking on of new hands, he may even decide piece-work prices at which the workmen under him carry out their work, but in all these cases, the office has particulars of the rates of wages, of piece-work prices and of earnings. Besides, there are now agreed district rates of wages for the different grades of workers and the trade union watches that these are paid and that the agreements are not violated. The union has also seen that what is left of the system does not result in low wages for the underhand worker and it has discouraged the system altogether. In 1919,

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(1) See Chapter 7 p. 248

(2) Brassworkers' Quarterly Journal, December 1918.



two important resolutions appeared upon the agenda of the annual conference of the trade union. One was that members should only be allowed to contract on a payment-by-result system and employ underhands on condition that they paid the agreed district rates to underhands and that after deduction of the time rates from the total proceeds, the surplus should be shared pro rata through the office. This was agreed to by the conference. The other was that the journeyman pieceworker employing underhands should <sup>be</sup> abolished and that all men should be paid from the office. By this time, however, the wages difficulties and the unrest which constantly arose from the feeling that the stigma of "sweating" was impressed upon the trade has largely been removed and it remains now to take the reader over the chronicle of events which have contributed to this happy state of affairs.



### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Birth of Trade Unionism in the Brassworking Trades.

- (i) Early Attempts at Labour Organisation.
- (ii) The Founding of a Trade Union and the Percentage Bonus.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### THE BIRTH OF TRADE UNIONISM IN THE BRASS-WORKING TRADES.

##### (1) Early Attempts at Labour Organisation.

The preceding account of workshop organisation in the brass trades will have illustrated for itself how chaotic a wages system - if there is ever such a thing as system in the payment of wages - must have developed. There was little hope of improving matters either, because journeymen were jealous of one another and combined action was so difficult to organise. Piece-work prices were numerous on account of the tremendous variety of patterns to which a manufacturer worked. Piece-work prices were subject to rapid alteration at times, because competition between manufacturers, small and large, was so keen. Besides, new designs were constantly being introduced. The very success of any business in such a trade depended upon a manufacturer's enterprise and ingenuity in putting novel and improved designs upon the market. The clever designer and the skilful pattern-maker were the greatest assets in a brassfounder's business. In fact, so important was the function of the designer and modeller, that in the years immediately preceding 1850, a special class of trade had grown up in the hawking of designs from factory to factory (1). A uniform piece-work price

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(1) "Labour and the Poor", Op.cit.

list to be applicable to each factory was out of the question, then, not only on account of the great variety in designs, but also because there was no stable organisation through which such a list could be devised, recognized and maintained. It would have been impossible to draw up such a list, except perhaps in the case of casters who were paid by the hundred-weight, simply because the designs of one manufacturer would not correspond to those of another. There may have been a rough degree of correspondence with some articles in some sections of the trade, but this signified nothing, for methods of manufacture differed from factory to factory, and equipment was more up-to-date in some works than in others. Thus, even with two pieces of work that required approximately the same degree of skill for their execution, there was no reason why labour cost should be approximately the same for each, nor why the piece work price should be anything like the same in each case. Naturally, the earnings of journeymen would differ within a single works and from one factory to another. Their earnings depended on the balance of bargaining strength between themselves and the master on the one hand and between themselves and the underhands on the other. The former depended largely upon conditions of competition in the market - domestic and foreign - for the goods produced, and the latter upon conditions of mobility in the labour market. Furthermore, the journeyman's earnings depended upon his own skill and that of the members of his "team" or "crew". His skill would determine whether he <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ to be employed on best

work which commanded a higher rate, or upon "common" work. One might well ask whether it has been possible to promote a more orderly and equitable condition of affairs, and one naturally expects to discover the answer in the story of attempts to inculcate the spirit of trade unionism into workers in the trade.

It was not until the year 1872 that any successful attempt to organise the brassworkers was made. But before that date, however, the idea of combination had been tried out. Such efforts, though, were sectional in character and as such were destined to failure. There had also been Sick Clubs in some of the larger works, but these had no industrial motives. One of such Clubs had existed in the largest establishment in Birmingham since 1828, and the men themselves exercised a large amount of control over its activities. The men contributed 3d. each per week, and the extra when heavy demands were made upon the Club. There was a "share-out" at Christmas, and one of the rules demanded a fine from any workman who struck another in the works (1). This particular scheme was perhaps exceptional in that the management of the firm interested itself in the welfare of its employees, and made efforts to maintain discipline and to improve the social standing of the workers. This is evidenced by the fact that a school had been incorporated into the routine of the works for the benefit of the younger

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(1) "Labour and the Poor". Op.cit.



workers (1). Such sick clubs were for provident and friendly purposes only, and were confined to individual works. There was no attempt to negotiate with masters in purely industrial relationships.

But attempts in the industrial sphere had been made from the twenties of the nineteenth century, following relaxation of the Combination Laws. In the brass nails trade, a combination of employers had been tried about the year 1824, with the object of eliminating competition and of maintaining trade prices. At the same time, the workmen had likewise combined, their efforts resulting in a piece-work price list for the trade, in which increases on existing prices had been secured. This attempt at combination was short-lived because the brass nails trade declined in importance, and save in the casting and dipping processes, female and juvenile labour was substituted for that of men. In 1840, there were thirteen manufacturers in the trade in Birmingham, but by 1850 the number had dwindled to four or five (2). The wages of the men had suffered in consequence. An old easter in the trade

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(1) "Labour and the Poor". Op.cit. and No.8. December 2nd, 1850. This school was established in 1844 and was open to children of the workers, as well as to children actually in the employ of the firm. Every boy employed by the firm had to attend, and a charge of 1d. per week was made for the instruction received. As it was evening work, it was difficult to get the children to concentrate after their day's work, and in times of good trade, the boys were tempted to stay on in the works to pick up more money. A similar type of school had been established in 1845, in the big glass works of Messrs Chance Bros. at West Bromwich.

(2) "Labour and the Poor". Op.cit.

is reported to have said that whereas he used to earn about fifty shillings a week independent of that which he paid to his underhands, in 1835 with the aid of three boys he could earn about thirty shillings, and in 1850, only about twenty shillings (1). One would expect this in a declining trade, and there was little wonder that manufacturers could not maintain their prices, on account of competition in a restricted market. Similarly, any effort on the part of the men to preserve their wage level was bound to lead nowhere.

In much the same way did the idea of combination spring up in another small section of the trade, and for much the same reason did it meet its doom. This was in the brass thimble trade, in the days when thimbles were cast, and when the labour force in the trade was composed mainly of male workers. In 1830, attempts to launch a trade society had been made, with the avowed objects of restricting the number of boys employed by journeymen, and of maintaining the piece-work prices; in short, to watch over the general interests of the workers. But the men could not agree among themselves, they never had any influence on piece work prices, and in less than a year the union had disappeared. Yet another attempt was made at combination in 1842, but met with no better success. By this time the character of the trade was changing; the thimble was much lighter article and was no longer cast. They were made on light presses which could easily be managed by women, and boys were able to do the turning under the

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(1) Ibid.

supervision of a male tool-maker. A boy in 1850 could make more thimbles in a week for 5/- or 6/- than an able-bodied man could have made for 25/- thirty years previously.

(1) Naturally the men in the trade would resent the resulting loss of employment and the reduction in their piece-work prices; but their efforts to stem the tide of their misfortunes through a revived trade society were of no avail.

Both of these early movements had developed in small sections of the trade. In neither case was the total labour force very large; it was estimated at about 300 in the brass nails trade and at about 200 in the thimble trade (2). The same lack of organisation was to be found though, in the larger and more important branches of the brass trade. In the cabinet brassfoundry trade, the workmen were generally subject to lower wages than in other sections, and it would have required a wholesale revolution both in thought and in organisation to remedy matters in that branch. The general features of commercial and industrial organisation in the trades of Birmingham have been admirably portrayed in another work (3), and it will be recalled that the representative firm was usually quite a small concern. It will further be recalled that it was comparatively easy for "garret-masters" and small shop-owners to thrive, especially in the cabinet branch of the brass trades. A "garret-master" required little equipment; a vice, a treadle lathe, a few files and turning

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) G.C.Allen, Op.cit.



tools were sufficient for a man, often a former journeyman, to set up a workshop in his own residence, and with the assistance of his wife and children to produce "slop" goods of light and inferior quality. These he would dispose of to factors and "slaughter-men", and sometimes to large manufacturers themselves at ruinously low prices. Not only, by so doing, was a man "sweating" himself for a living, but he had a most evil influence on the earnings of men employed by respectable manufacturers. In such circumstances and under such conditions, the existence of organised effort among the workmen was almost beyond the bounds of possibility, quite apart from the petty jealousies among the journeymen themselves. In the lamp and chandelier trade, which was of equal importance from the viewpoint of the numbers employed in it, conditions were little better, except that there were fewer "garret-masters", on account of the larger capital equipment required. Here again, the men were too divided to do anything for their mutual advancement, although a trade society, the membership of which never exceeded 50 or 60, was commenced a few years before 1850 <sup>(1)</sup>. Needless to relate, it did not survive for very long.

In the other of the three main sections of the trade, namely the cockfounding branch, the workmen had been more successful in their endeavour to protect their own interests than had their fellows in the other sections. In this instance, we are again able to trace events back to 1824, at which date a combination among the masters had sprung up,

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(1) "Labour and the Poor". On 24th.



with the same objects for which most of such combinations are formed, namely, the regulation of trade prices so as to maintain them at a remunerative level. This combination endured for about eight or nine years, after which it broke up, for the same reasons that most of such loose associations come to grief. The manufacturers were unable to abide by their own rules and began to sell at prices below their own list prices. About the time when this combination of manufacturers was inaugurated, there had been a partial strike with the men in this section of the trade. In this the workmen were defeated, but defeat served as a stimulant to combination among them, and their later efforts met with reward. They succeeded in getting better terms from the masters, and came to an arrangement in respect of a piece-work price list for the trade. This list of prices was maintained for about eighteen years, but adjustments in earnings were made from time to time by percentage "discounts" rather than by a revision of the prices. By 1845, these "discounts" had in some cases amounted to as much as 25% off a man's earnings calculated on the list of prices arranged in 1824. The trade society had languished somewhat in the intervening twenty years, but it underwent a measure of re-organisation in 1845, with the result that it was strong enough to secure the abolition of the system of "discounts" and to have the 1824 list reinstated. Furthermore, it became the rule of the union that no journeyman should employ more than one boy. This regulation regarding the employment of

juvenile labour has been a policy pursued by many trades unions at different times, as a means of sustaining employment and protecting wage levels by controlling the recruitment of labour.

This society survived for many years, although it did not possess any printed rules until 1885 <sup>(1)</sup>. Its membership was never very large, because it was confined to only one section even of the cock-founding trade. In 1850, it had 130 members, and the total estimated number of workers, apart from boys and women coremakers, was 180 at that date <sup>(2)</sup>; so that the trade was fairly well represented in the society. Such trade societies were naturally unpopular with the masters, not only because they interfered with working conditions, but also because it was held that such bodies were apt to promote idleness among the men. Usually, the meetings of such a society were held in a public-house, and this fact together with the inglorious reputation as a drunkard's that the Birmingham workmen then enjoyed would inevitably create a moral bias against a society of this kind. There was some justification for this attitude, for drunkenness was a common failing among workers in the district, notoriously among pearl-button makers <sup>(3)</sup>. The brassworker was in most cases

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(1) Webb Manuscripts.

(2) "Labour and the Poor". Op.cit.

(3) "Labour and the Poor". No.IV.Nov. 4th, 1850.

In 1850, there was one establishment for the sale of alcoholic beverages to every 33 dwelling places. Estimate given in "Labour and the Poor" - Morning Chronicle, No.1, October 7th, 1850.

little better, and followed the usual practice in the district of "playing away" on Monday and often on Tuesday as well (1). Another reason why the Brass Cock Finishers' Trade Society, as it was called, was objectionable in the eyes of the masters, was that it resisted the introduction of new appliances in the trade and new methods of production, and thereby retarded improvements. The members of the society were drawn from the "tighted" or "shut-off" branch of tap-making, and would have nothing to do with the "screwed-down" tap, a newer development whereby the metal plug was screwed into a barrel instead of being fitted or "tighted". The old cock-founders never would recognize the newer method, and never admitted workmen engaged in it to membership of the society. It was complained in 1865 (2) that in the "tighted" branch no attempt had been made to supersede manual production by machinery. The society which at that time claimed 160 members out of 300 employed in the "tighted" branch, was blamed for the fact that "in no department of the brass trade has there been less change in tools and appliances working". (3) Evidence was forthcoming

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(1) These days were called "Saint Monday" and "Saint Tuesday" in the district. This "Monday worship" meant that work was crowded into the later part of the week, thereby necessitating long hours of labour.

(2) W.C. Aitken. "Brass and Brass Manufacture" in "Birmingham & Midland Hardware District" (ed. Timmins) p.289.

(3) Ibid. p. 290.



fourteen years later that methods of production in the plumbing and steam fittings branch were far behind those in use in America. During arbitration proceedings in 1879, a workman who had spent fourteen years in America out of his thirty years' experience in the trade testified as to the vast contrast in equipment between Birmingham and America. He pointed to the better hand and lathe tools in use in that country, to the fact that hand screw-cutting tools were still largely used in Birmingham and that the slide-rest had not been introduced in Birmingham either. (1) One can scarcely connect this entirely with the policy of the old cock-founders but these certainly had some influence in the matter, and the strictures passed in 1865 by a manufacturer were probably well founded. These old cock-founders formed a closed and exclusive corporation and they never extended their activities beyond Birmingham, although this branch of the trade was not confined to the Birmingham area.

They preserved a separate existence even after the formation of a strong trade union which catered for all brass-workers. They never would throw in their lot with the Brass-workers' Society after 1872, mainly because they did not wish to hand over their funds. Some of the members did join the Brass-workers' Society which was founded in that year but in the early 'seventies the old society still had a membership of about 125 when it was in a strong position. (2) By 1879, however, its numerical strength had diminished considerably, for only 50 or

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(1) Report of an Arbitration in Chandelier and Gasfittings

(2) Webb Manuscripts.

Trade, 1879.

60 brassworkers were still then attached to it (1). They still possessed their list of piece-work prices but this only operated in the six or seven shops from which the members were drawn. In 1872, when the brassworkers gained a general advance in earnings of 15 per cent. in lieu of piecework price revision this bonus was not paid in those shops in which the old cock-finishers' list was still in operation. In 1873, however, increases had been made in their piece-work prices, which accounted for the fact that prices in those shops were slightly higher than those obtaining in shops not still subject to the influence of the old society. (2) Even in the shops clinging to the old list, masters were sometimes able to evade payment (3) of the regulation prices by getting the work done by outworkers

The Society had no printed rules until the year 1885, when it was registered as a trade union under the terms of the Trade Union Act of 1871. (4) The full name of this organisation was the Birmingham Operative Brass Cock Finishers Trade, Sick and Dividend Society. The membership was not large at that time and ranged between 50 and 60 in the 'nineties. (5) The contribution to the society was only 3d. per week but that (6)

(1) Report of Arbitration in Chandelier and Gasfittings Trade, 1879.

(2) Vide Appendix B.1. for the 1873 list of prices.

(3) Arbitration Report 1879.

(4) Registration was effected on September 25th, 1885. (Record of Registrations of Friendly Societies.)

(5) Records of Registry of Friendly Societies. Also Webb Manuscripts.

(6) Personal enquiry.

was before it had become a formally constituted trade union. There were two funds, a trade fund and a sick fund, the contribution being equally divided between these two branches of its activities. The sick fund was shared out among the members at Christmas and it was provided in the rules of the society that when the accumulated surplus in the Trade Fund had reached £1000, any excess over that should be divided in the same manner as the Sick Fund. (1) The society was in a strong financial position in the nineties and the accumulated surplus in the trade fund stood at £500 in 1890. (2) There had been no disturbances or strikes among the members, because the society was hardly strong enough at that date to enter into any collective wages negotiations for the men.

The body was, nevertheless, a trade union and as such would not countenance the sub-contracting system. These old cock-finishers were all pieceworkers who remained loyal to the rule of the union that no member should employ more than one boy to assist him. It is interesting to note that this trade union has not yet disappeared from the trade, although it has been growing weaker and weaker in recent years. This is shown by the following record for its membership. (3)

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(1) Webb Manuscripts.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Figures supplied by Registrar of Friendly Societies.



Membership of Brass Cock Finishers' Trade Society.

<u>Year of Return</u>	<u>Number of members at end of each year.</u>
1890	49
1895	39
1900	60
1905	58
1910	57
1915	41
1920	37
1925	29
1929	25.

The union still maintains its benefits and there is a dividend at the end of the year. The total of its accumulated funds does not, however, amount to as much as £100. There has been no recruitment of members for many years and the twenty odd members are all old hands at the trade. (1) The Society can hardly survive very much longer and will probably succumb in a few years' time but it has a long history attaching to its name. The members are all highly skilled hands belonging to the water and steam fittings section of the trade. They are not workers having any connection with the "screwed down" branch, although nowadays, the demand for "tighted" products is almost negligible. At one stage in its career, the society had several members employed at one of the prominent engineering establishments in the locality but now the members are scattered in twos and threes in various plumbers' brassfounders' establishments. They are adaptable workmen and, although

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(1) Several of them learnt their trade in the old days on the primitive {treadle-lathe".

the equipment of the brassfoundry has undergone much transformation within their living memory, they are often called upon to put their hands to the fashioning of newer brass-wares (1) on the more up-to-date brass-turners lathes.

The old Society can be justly proud of its long record and it seems a pity that in a few years' time, its memory may have passed away for ever. There is now little need for such an organisation, though, since health insurance legislation and other social insurances now provide the same facilities for workmen. We can gain an idea of the purpose of this small organisation from the following extract from its amended rules of 1914 :

"The objects of this Society shall be to promote unity and goodwill among its members and mutual respect between employers and employees; to encourage habits of sobriety and providence; to prevent as far as possible the occurrence of strikes and lock-outs; by organising a recognised body representing the trade, with which masters may communicate in case of disputes arising; to protect the interests of its members, by securing to each the full price for his work according to the list agreed upon between the masters and this Society; to secure also a certain sum per week during the continuance of any strike or lock-out the Society may recognise; also a certain sum per week while any member may unavoidably be out of employment and to secure him fresh employment as soon as possible.

"To secure a certain amount to be paid per week during sickness; also a stated sum upon the death of a member, to be paid on satisfactory proof of member's death ; and part of such sum shall be allowed to be drawn at death of member's death. "

There is no connection whatsoever, between this small union and the main trade union catering for all brassworkers , and its activities in the industrial sphere bear no comparison

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(1) Motor car parts, for example.

with those of the larger organisation. So we must retrace our steps to the year 1872 in order to cover the real history of trade unionism and collective bargaining in the Birmingham brass trades. This we do in the next part of this present chapter.



(11) The Founding of a Trade Union and  
the Percentage Bonus.

From what has been outlined above it will be evident that piecework prices and questions of skill were going to loom large in later negotiations in the trade, and the reader may still be wondering whether it would have been possible to organise the workers in all sections of the trade and to negotiate by conciliatory means. Yet a strong trade union has functioned for close on sixty years, and there have been few violent disturbances in the trade, although a considerable amount of unrest has been aroused on some occasions. If brassworkers have gained from their organised efforts, - and the reader will be able to judge that for himself when he has completed his journey through these pages - they owe their good fortune largely to the energy of one man, the man who grasped opportunities when they came and made the best of them in launching a really sound trade union, the man who served that union for close upon fifty years.

While certain sections of the brass trades have declined, new branches of manufacture have been constantly arising, and the brass trades as a whole have always been expanding. Generally, conditions have been favourable for their expansion, as may be gathered from our knowledge of the extension of gas-lighting in the nineteenth century,

the immense strides made in sanitation (with a consequent demand for water-fittings), and the rapid development of railway transportation. There were, of course, periods of depressed trade, when conditions of competition were likely to be keen, and the brass trades experienced booms and depressions when other trades prospered or suffered. The first three years of the 'seventies of the last century certainly stand out as years of an unprecedented prosperity. The brass trades were ~~not~~ alone in their enjoyment of such comfortable circumstances, and British industry in general may still look back with envious regard upon those years. Trade was booming, in some measure due to the Franco-Prussian War, and prices were rising rapidly. Never had employers in the brass trades found profits so easy to acquire, and, as is usually the case, never had workmen found it so difficult to get a living. There were no means of ensuring that they would share in this prosperity. The workers in the early 'seventies, then, were confronted with a substantial increase in their normal cost of living, and were at a grave disadvantage. The journeymen were further handicapped at this time because they were faced with the necessity of paying enhanced wages to underhands. The factory legislation of the 'sixties had contributed to their trouble in this direction, for previous to 1867 the metal industries had not come within the compass of the law and

juvenile labour had been exploited.<sup>(1)</sup> The provisions of the Factory Acts (Extension) Act of 1867 introduced some element of restriction upon the free employment of young underhands. The scarcity of underhand labour arising both from this and from the generally improved conditions of trade made underhand labour dearer, and the journeyman suffered because his piece-work prices were not correspondingly increased. Just about this time, the idea of combination among workers had received a great fillip as a result of the trade union legislation of 1871. What more opportune moment than 1872 for an attempt to organise the brassworkers !

Early in that year, a meeting of a few brassworkers took place in a Birmingham public-house, the outcome of the discussions at which was the formulation of a plan to encourage brassworkers to press for an advance in piece-work prices and in day-work wages. It was quite an informal meeting, there was no very definite desire to form a trade union, but it was decided to circularise brassworkers urging them to combine for the purpose of securing an advance and inviting representatives from different workshops to attend a conference at which the whole project was to be reviewed. At both of these meetings a young man of barely twenty-four years of age was present. He was an energetic and capable

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(1) 3rd Report of Children's Employment Commission, 1865.  
Also Reports of Factory Inspector, 1868.



workman, for during the eleven years that he had been in the brass trades he had been in six places of employment and had already become a journeyman. This young man took a keen interest in this movement for an advance in wages, and was a member of the "Bonus Committee", whose mandate was to agitate for an advance of 15 per cent. on the earnings of every brassworker. This Committee was quite prepared to disband and not entertain the idea of forming a trade union if the demand were conceded. (1) The petition that the Committee addressed to a large number of employers was treated with contempt, which proved sufficient stimulus to those who had advocated the formation of a trade union to proceed with the task. Out of a hundred circulars sent out, only two replies were received. (2) Meetings of brassworkers were held, the union took form, and the energetic young man who was destined many years later to be known as the "Father of the Trade Union Congress", was elected the first secretary of the new organisation. (3) Thus did W. J. Davis commence his long association with the Amalgamated Society of Brassworkers (4).

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(1) This was intimated on the first circular addressed to employers.

(2) Evidence at Arbitration, 1879.

(3) The first meeting of brassworkers was held on April 18th, 1872. The original name by which the union was called was "The Amalgamated Brassworkers' Mutual Protection Society". This was soon afterwards altered to "National Amalgamated Society of Brassworkers."

(4) W. J. Davis was born in Birmingham in 1848. He received little early education - only two-and-a-half years at a dame-school - but he made up for this by his self-education and attendance at night-school. He was 13 years of age when he entered the brass trades, but ceased to be a workman when he became Secretary of the Brassworkers'

It was a fortunate choice, for this young man was an enthusiast without being a firebrand, he preferred the path of conciliation to the more extreme measure of the strike, and in his long connection with the Society he never wavered from this attitude.

The first task of the young organisation was to press for a 15 per cent. bonus on piece-work and day-work earnings, and in pursuing this objective the Society did not begin by attacking the trade as a whole. The brass trades had been roughly classified for the constitutional purposes of the new Society, and the first move was made in the cabinet branch of the trade, in which earnings were generally lower than for the brass trades as a whole. Circulars were sent out to employers in this section under the authority this time of a properly constituted trade union. The request was considered at two conferences of representative employers and workers: at the first, the men would not accede to the employers' suggestion of arbitration<sup>(1)</sup> but at the second, after a lengthy discussion, agreement was

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Society in 1872. But for one brief interval, from 1883 to 1890, he remained General Secretary until 1921, when he retired at the age of 73. He now lives in retirement in Paris at the grand old age of 82. He was one of the most successful trade union leaders, and after 1881 was elected twenty-six times to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. Although he took part in local government activities, he never became a M.P. He did contest for a seat on one occasion in 1892, but he never submitted himself to the electorate on any other occasion. (See W. A. Dalley - "Life Story of W.J. Davis", 1914).

(1) Webb Manuscripts.

reached. The bonus of 15 per cent. was conceded and thus, by friendly negotiations, the new organisation had triumphed within four months of its birth. This success led to a vast expansion in membership of the Society, for never within the memory of the men had such possibilities been opened up to them. They had never before experienced a general wage advance in the trade. Some of the older workmen could remember the previous unsuccessful attempts to improve their position by combined action, and they could remember their own individual impotence when reductions in piece-work prices were enforced. There seemed now some hope of their being able to withstand such onslaughts. With an increasing membership, applications for the bonus of 15 per cent. were made in other sections of the trade. The Society proceeded in a similar manner as it had done in the cabinet section by sending an address to employers in the chandelier and gas-fittings branch of the trade. This was met with a refusal, but at a meeting of employers there was a willingness to consider the revision of certain piece-work prices. At this, the men grew restive and held a crowded meeting to give colour to their enthusiasm and sincerity. Later, at a meeting between a deputation from the Society and a body of representative employers, when there seemed too much opposition to the claim for an immediate settlement to be reached, the men took the extreme measure of handing in the notices of all casters and burnishers in that



section of the trade. This threat was sufficient, and the employers surrendered. Within a month of its first success, the Society had achieved another, and having secured the bonus in the two largest branches of the trade, there was little difficulty in obtaining a similar bonus in the steam fittings and plumbers' brassfoundry branch and in such smaller branches as umbrella furniture, military ornaments and buttons, and in the highly ornate brasswork known as mediaeval brassware.

So the young Society added to its prestige and spread its net beyond Birmingham itself. Before twelve months had elapsed branches had been opened at Wolverhampton, Sheffield and Rotherham, and at Walsall it had not lost much time in making itself into a thorough-going trade union, complete with its friendly and out-of-work benefits. By the end of the first year its total membership stood at 5,700, of which 5,115 were on the Birmingham books, 390 at Wolverhampton, 44 at Walsall,<sup>(1)</sup> and 151 in the Sheffield and Rotherham branch.<sup>(2)</sup> But the Society was not able to <sup>ob</sup>tain the bonus of 15 per cent. for those of its members who were in the tube and bedstead trades, and after a strike<sup>(3)</sup> in these sections, such failure led to early secessions from the

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(1) The brassworkers at Walsall were mainly engaged in the manufacture of harness and saddlery furniture.

(2) Annual Reports, 1872 - 73.

(3) Webb Manuscripts.

union, with the result that membership declined rapidly to 4,200. <sup>(1)</sup> These secessions, however, meant that, except for the casters, the remaining members of the organisation were mainly mechanics. It was several years before workers in those other two sections were to achieve any success either at organisation or in wages negotiations, and they might have done better to have been more patient and remained in the society. <sup>(2)</sup> The list of members on the Executive Council at that time presents a singular appearance to anyone who is only acquainted with the trade as it is to-day. The Council was divided up according to departments of the trade, with representatives for each department. There were fifteen representatives for each of the chandelier and cabinet departments, four each for plumber's brassfoundry and casters, two each for umbrella furniture and military ornaments, and one for the mediaeval section. It seems odd to see the casting department treated as a separate section. But there was a reason for this; the casters were the elite of the trade, and they were quite a distinct class of worker from the mechanics in the finishing shops. Besides there have always been out-casters in the trade, who produced rough castings for other manufacturers. There were 42 of

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(1) Annual Reports, 1873 - 74.

(2) The Bedstead Workers' Association dates from 1889, and the Metal, Wire and Tube Workers' Society from 1896.

such out-casters in 1865.<sup>(1)</sup>

In paying such assiduous attention to the details of these early negotiations, we cannot fail to note the significance of the methods employed and the type of wage adjustment that was made. The advance was obtained by conference and peaceful negotiation, except that the threat of a strike had to be put before employers in one section. Secondly, the advance was in the nature of a percentage bonus, to be added to the earnings of all workers, whether timeworkers or pieceworkers. It would have been impossible to revise piecework prices all round, so as to <sup>en</sup>sure a fair and comparable advance to all workers, because, on account of the huge variety of patterns there were so many piecework prices. There would have been much ground for dissension if journeymen were called upon to pay increased weekly rates to the extent of 15 per cent. to their underhands, and to rely on an arbitrary increase in piecework prices to supply an additional sum sufficient to cover the advances to underhands as well as to themselves. So the same piecework prices were to obtain and the journeyman would receive from the office his earnings on the basis of these prices plus a 15 per cent. bonus. He could then pay his underhands, with the exception of the boys<sup>(2)</sup> their bonus of 15 per cent. on the figure at

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(1) W. C. Aitken. *Op.cit.* p. 359.

(2) Evidence at Arbitration, 1879.



which he rated them. It was the shortest way out of a difficulty, and was the normal way in which wage adjustments were made for pieceworkers. It certainly avoided lots of possible complications.

But complications were not always absent from the calculation of the bonus, and one serious dispute arose which was not settled for several weeks. Before the cause of this dispute can be appreciated, the reader must be acquainted with another peculiar feature which had sprung up in some of the trades of the district, among which the brass trades figured prominently. This was the deduction that was made from a journeyman's earnings for "mill-power" and "light", and occasionally for materials. It was quite common for deductions to be made each week for the use of a steam-lathe or for the benefit of gas-lighting in the shop. To a student of modern factory conditions, this seems intolerable, unreasonable, and unjust; yet the journeyman raised no objection. If a master decided to introduce into his shop more up-to-date appliances, such as to substitute steam-lathes for the old foot-lathes, then the journeyman was enabled to produce more goods in a given time, and it was not profitable for the master to assume this <sup>extra</sup> capital cost, with its resultant increase in overhead charges, and at the same time to pay identical piece-work prices to those under the former method of working. But rather than embark upon the extremely complicated task

of revising all piece-work prices so as to allow for these extra facilities afforded to the workman, it was simpler to retain the former traditional prices and to make deductions of an agreed amount from the earnings of the journeyman. In the same way, if the employer went to the expense of having gas lighting installed in the works as an improvement on candles, the men were prepared to submit to a small deduction from their weekly earnings. In some cases men were known to have petitioned the employer to lay down better equipment. <sup>(1)</sup> Of course, day-workers and underhands were not subject to such deductions, since it was a much more simple matter to make allowance in their wages for such facilities. These deductions would naturally differ from establishment to establishment; they might have been anything from 1/- up to 3/6d. per week for "mill-power", and from 3d. to 6d. per week for "gas". They might even have been in the form of a percentage deduction off earnings, instead of in the form of a fixed sum. In a new establishment they might not have existed at all, since such a concern would be most likely to adopt the most up-to-date appliances, and piece-work prices would be arranged accordingly.

Where such deductions were in operation, they were apt to cause some confusion in the calculation of the bonus.

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(1) Arbitration Report, 1900. First Day, p. 22.

The question arose as to whether this 15 per cent. bonus should be added before the deductions for "mill-power" had been made, or vice-versa. Actually, this depended upon whether the deduction was a fixed sum per week or a percentage figure. It was not fair to deduct the "mill-power" item first if this was in the form of a stated sum of money, because the management would thereby be increasing the charge for "mill-power" by 15 per cent., which extra charge was really a part of the man's bonus. But in cases where the deduction was so much per cent., it was immaterial which method was adopted, since the same result would be arrived at by either. (1)

(1) Take the two following cases as examples -

(a) Example given by W.J. Davis in Arbitration of 1879.

Fixed Sum Method.

Piecework Earnings,	40/-
Bonus 15%	6/-
	<u>46/-</u>
Less 2 Lathes @ 2/6	
and 3 Gas lights at 4d.	6/-
Wage receivable -	<u>40/-</u>

Piecework Earnings,	40/-
Less "Deductions"	6/-
	<u>34/-</u>
Bonus, 15%	5/2
Wage receivable -	<u>39/2</u>

(b) Example given in Correspondence re Wolverhampton dispute, in "Birmingham Daily Post", March 25th, 1874.

Percentage Method.

Piecework Earnings,	20/-
Bonus, 15%	3/-
	<u>23/-</u>
Less 12½% "Deductions"	2/10½
Wage receivable -	<u>20/1½</u>

Piecework Earnings,	20/-
Less 12½% Deduction,	2/6
	<u>17/6</u>
Bonus 15%	2/7½
Wage receivable,	<u>20/1½</u>



One dispute on this question with a firm at Wolverhampton lasted for about six weeks. On the whole the percentage method of making deductions was not widely employed, but firms generally calculated the bonus in the correct manner. Where firms did not adopt the right method they were soon reminded of it by the trade union.

It must not be assumed that this bonus of 15 per cent. was easily obtained and paid to every brassworker in Birmingham and district. Those few employers who had met to consider the men's demands had no power to impose a collective will upon all employers in the trade, and it was left to the union to bring pressure to bear upon employers who were slow in recognising the concession. The union had to intervene in numerous instances to ensure that the bonus was generally paid, and while trade continued brisk there was little difficulty encountered. It was by no means easy, though, to extend the bonus into the small workshops which abounded in the neighbourhood; these were prone to destroy the efficacy of trade union activity, and were to figure prominently in subsequent wages negotiations in the trades. As business fell away somewhat after 1874, employers sought in many works to evade the bonus by enforcing reductions in piecework prices. <sup>(1)</sup> In many such cases, the union representative, <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ a useful advocate for

(1) Arbitration Report, 1879. Given in evidence.

the journeyman. The percentage bonus, however, was to become an established feature in the brass trades; it was still in existence in 1914, but by that time it had undergone four alterations since its original inception in 1872. In the fixing of a new piecework price after 1872, the bonus was always allowed for by the management, but, even so, the journeymen were in a much stronger position. If they found themselves being forced to work at prices which they considered unduly low, there was always an energetic Executive body to assist them in their bargaining resistance to the management. This power was not always as effective as it might have been, on account of the mutual jealousies of the journeymen themselves, but there is no gainsaying that the aid of the union was invaluable in getting fair prices for journeymen.

The Society had a special rule in its constitution concerning the procedure in case of complaint about badly-priced work. First of all there was an enquiry by the Executive into the reasonableness of the claim, then a sub-committee might be appointed to investigate the matter further. This sub-committee was to consist of not less than six members making similar articles, but not one of these members was to be drawn from the factory where the price was alleged to be low. Evidence could be taken and a strict enquiry into the pattern and finish was instituted. If the

claim was considered to have been made out, then the member was to be supported in his negotiations with the management, and if necessary was to be paid benefit if labour had to be withdrawn. There were safeguards against a member just joining the union for the immediate good he might get from the Society in this way, because no member could obtain benefit under the rule in question unless he had subscribed for six months to the Society. Neither were "frivolous demands" encouraged, because an aggrieved member was required to pay a deposit of three shillings when the Society was called in, and this was forfeited if the claim were not made out. No deposit was necessary, however, if it were a dispute in which the whole of the workmen in a factory were concerned. The name of any workman who took on the work that an aggrieved member, who was supported by the union, would not do at the employer's price, was to be published to the trade. It was thus an important function of the union to protect the pieceworker in the matter of his prices. (1)

The Society also embodied rules in its constitution whereby the bonus was used as a means of maintaining the financial strength of the organisation. It was provided that if a journeyman were six weeks in arrears of contribution to

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(1) Rules of Brassworkers' Society in Webb Collection.



the Society, the delegates from the factory in which he was employed should approach the employer and solicit him to "stop" a portion of that man's bonus for the purpose of making up his arrears. In the same way, if an underhand were six week's behind in his contributions, the journeyman was to "stop" a portion of his bonus, and pay it over to the Society. (1) The writer has no evidence to show to what extent this rule was carried out.

Thus, the foundation of better conditions had been laid. There was now an institution in the trade for ensuring that the workers would benefit during periods of prosperity and rising prices; there now seemed some hope that the anomalies of divers piecework prices would be removed, and there was some means of support during slack periods by virtue of the union's out-of-work fund. (2) But the really basic problems had scarcely been touched. It was a union controlled by journeymen, there was little protection for the underhand, there was no means of regulating a man's earnings fairly according to his capacities and skill, and it was a union which was but grudgingly tolerated by only a proportion of the masters in the trade. The bonus, in spite of these facts was a great achievement.

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(1) Rules of Brassworkers' Society in Webb Collection.

(2) This was constantly referred to by the union officials as the "grandest feature of the association". "Annual Reports".

CHAPTER 4.

Conciliation, Arbitration and the Percentage Bonus.

1872-1900.

CHAPTER 4.CONCILIATION, ARBITRATION, AND THE PERCENTAGE BONUS,  
1872 - 1900.

The inauguration of a trade union in the brass trades led inevitably to an increase in the number of open disputes in the trade. There may have been bickering and unpleasantness between masters and men before this, but all was in favour of the employer, and such differences as did arise rarely assumed the gravity of a dispute. The journeyman was but an individual in the trade, and was not likely to press his own claim as far as to reap the penalty of discharge through sheer stubbornness. To some extent, this new trade society removed this sense of individuality, and strengthened the bargaining power of the journeyman. Thus, unrest was much more obvious with the existence of a trade union. The union officers were being called upon to assist in the settlement of hundreds of disputes within the course of the year, most of them involving the pricing of piecework or the payment of the bonus. Although these disputes were mainly minor affairs affecting individual establishments, there was always the possibility that feelings would be aroused, and that some dispute may lead one day to bitter controversy and violent quarrelling. Such did not appeal to the young secretary of the organisation. He conceived of the idea of some fixed type of conciliatory machinery, by which any grave difference may be settled by peaceful<sup>means</sup>, and through which friendly



relations may be preserved.

As early as the year 1874, he had succeeded in entering into an understanding with the Chandelier and Gas-fittings Trade Employers' Association <sup>(1)</sup>, whereby any dispute if not settled by the ordinary methods of negotiation, should be submitted to both associations for settlement by direct negotiations. If this did not yield a settlement, the matter was to be referred to a joint conference of representatives of both sides. The last recourse was to arbitration under an independent umpire selected by mutual consent at another joint conference. The decision of the umpire was to be final and binding for twelve months at least <sup>(2)</sup>. This agreement was only applicable to the few employers in this Association. Notwithstanding this reservation, for an organisation so young, the step was a move in the right direction. Trade unionism had been fortunate in its recent relations with the Statute Book, but in the minds of employers, it was still associated with strikes and "rattening", and similar disturbances, which to the employer <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ unwelcome interference <sup>s</sup> with his rights, and influences tending to undermine his control over the discipline of his employees. Therefore, for a union to desire conciliation rather than obstinate conflict would promote a greater measure of confidence among employers in

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(1) The Bonus campaign of 1872 had stimulated organisation among the larger employers in this Section of the trade. There was also an employer's association for cabinet and general brassfoundry manufacturers.

(2) Annual Reports - 1874-75. Also, W.A. Dalley. Op.cit. pp.66-68.

the aims of this new force in the trade. The union was scorned by many employers in the district, and consequently this scheme of conciliation and arbitration which had been conceived after a big dispute in the trade, was not accepted by all employers. This fact was responsible for suspension of work at two factories in 1874 and 1875 <sup>(1)</sup>. On the whole, the scheme worked satisfactorily, and was soon to be put to the test when the bonus was again to be the subject of dispute.

This agreement was the first check on the individual wage bargain, and there was soon to be another one; for, in the following year a commencement was made with the problem of assimilating piece-work prices. It has already been shown that there was nothing like uniformity with regard to piecework price in any section of the trade, even for the manufacture of articles of a similar nature. This matter was taken up on behalf of one class of brassworkers in the year 1875. These were the hinge-dressers who were hard-worked and poorly-paid. They were pressing for an advance in earnings, and after lengthy negotiations piecework prices were revised all round on hinges up to 3 inches, so as to yield advances averaging 22½ percent <sup>(2)</sup>. Not only were prices increased, but they were also made uniform for all factories. This hinge dressers' list for the manufacture of hinges up to 3 inches remained in operation for many years after its original enforcement in July 1876. During the last twenty years or

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Annual Reports, 1875-76. Vide Appendix <sup>B<sub>2</sub></sup> for actual List.

more, the smaller hinges have been stamped and not cast, so that the labour of dressing has become unnecessary and the list <sup>is</sup> no longer of any consequence. But that the list enjoyed a long life is evidenced by the fact that it was still operative for cast hinges in 1913. The actual prices had undergone no revision, the only difference being in the magnitude of the percentage bonus (1). There were many difficulties in drawing up the original list in 1875, in spite of the fact that the articles concerned were not likely to show a very great diversity of pattern. The small hinge was a fairly standardised article. Although it became the policy of the union to aim at assimilating piece work prices where similar work was done, very little success was going to be achieved in the dressing and finishing establishments (2). The next uniform list in the finishing sections was not secured until the year 1892, (3) when one was agreed upon for the manufacture of sash

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(1) W.A. Dalley. Op. cit. p 70. Also Personal Enquiry.

(2) (A) In a footnote on p. 358 of Webb's "History of Trade Unionism" it is stated that W. J. Davis "completed the difficult and laborious task of constructing a list of prices for all brass work, for which he obtained the employers' recognition". This statement is entirely erroneous and misleading. It is true for prices for castings only. See p. and Appendices. B. 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

(3) (A) Annual Reports, 1892-93.



fasteners. Even for casters, who were paid so much per hundredweight of rough castings, there was no comprehensive uniform list until 1897; although a list in the cabinet section was drawn up late in 1882 and became operative in 1883. Another casters' list was also arranged in 1890.

Piece work prices were to occupy the Society's attention quite often after 1875, since the trade boom of the early 'seventies was soon to subside, and the brass trades in common with other trades were to suffer from the subsequent depression. In 1872, the price of copper was at its height, having risen to £118 per ton in June of that year <sup>(1)</sup>, and in addition labour costs had been increased on account of the bonus. These increased expenses of production had been reflected in increased selling prices. But when trade began to fall away, the bonus was seriously jeopardised; manufacturers had then to increase trade discounts and thus reduce their

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(1) Arbitration Report, 1879.

selling prices in a continually falling market. They found the bonus a handicap and often sought to evade it by reducing piece work prices. The Society had to combat against this on many occasions; between February 1877 and February 1878, the Executive was called upon to deal with over 300 disputes (1), and most of these would concern piece work prices. In the prosperous years, several manufacturers had extended their establishments and laid down expensive equipment. They found the newly resulting overhead costs a great burden when the market turned against them later. The workmen suffered also from loss of employment and short-time, and membership of the union was adversely affected in the later 'seventies (2).

In such circumstances, the bonus was certainly in danger of being attacked, and it eventually suffered reduction in 1879, when it was reduced to 10 per cent. The notice that the payment of the full 15 per cent would be suspended from

(1) Annual Reports, 1877-78. These disputes were not all in Birmingham, for by that date, the Society had branches at Halifax, Bradford and four in London, besides those mentioned on p. 77.

(2) Membership figures for Birmingham branch were:-  
 1875-76 - 4,219.                      1877-78 - 3,691  
 1876-77 - 3,604.                      1878-79 - 3,796

March 1st, came by constitutional methods from the Chandelier and Gasfittings Trade Association, and in accordance with the terms of the agreement made in 1874, the men's representatives met employers representatives to discuss the matter. The immediate outcome of this conference was a tentative agreement

"that on condition the employers withdraw their proposition, we, the representatives of the National Society of Brassworkers have pledged ourselves to enforce the payment of the 15 per cent bonus by the employers, and not to ask for a further increase on the 15 per cent when the trade revives". (1)

Thus the men were endeavouring to make the bonus a permanent feature (2) of the trade by promising the employers that they would pursue tactics to compel all manufacturers to pay the bonus, and that they would abstain from further applications for an advance on 15 per cent. But the employers were not to be placated; after reference to a full meeting of the employers, at which, incidentally, there was not complete unanimity of opinion, there was a feeling in favour of arbitration.

There were one or two employers who did not agree to the withdrawal of the bonus, among them being some of the most prominent firms in Birmingham (3). Eventually, it was decided to take the question to arbitration, at the proceedings

(1) Arbitration Report, 1879.

(2) W.A. Dalley, Op.cit. p.

(3) One member of the employers association, which only numbered 27 members, resigned as a result of his disagreement.



of which some illuminating passages were read from employers' replies to the Association's request for support in withdrawing the bonus. One of them read:

"....and inasmuch as we find that two-thirds of the employers in our branch of the brass-foundry business are totally indifferent to the movement, and the whole of the cabinet department are against us, we think the time has not yet arrived for us to take such decisive action in the matter" (1)

Another reply summed up very well what economists like to say in another more euphemistic manner. It read:

"Gentlemen, - In reply to your letter .... we beg to say that we engage and pay all our workmen at so much per hour, according to what they are worth to us - not by the piece. When the movement for the 15 per cent was first agitated for, we made this advance all round, and very soon weeded out all the men we did not consider were worth the money we were paying them. Whatever may be the result of the present arbitration in this matter, it will not affect us in any way. We should still continue to pay each man what we consider him to be worth". (1)

So the brassworkers had experience of arbitration for the first time. A celebrated local figure was selected as arbitrator, in the <sup>person</sup> ~~presence~~ of George Dixon, and the whole proceedings occupied the last four days of April 1879. The arbitration affected the chandelier and gasfittings makers only, although some employers in the plumbing and steam fittings section also were members of the same Trade Association. As the employers had made the move for the withdrawal of the bonus, the onus was on them to prove that such was necessary. They conducted their case on the following

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(1) Arbitration Report, 1879.

lines: the bonus was conceded in 1872 mainly to compensate the brassworker for an increase in his cost of living, but since that date the general level of prices had substantially declined, rendering the bonus no longer justifiable on those grounds. Secondly, home trade had been depressed since 1874, coincident with growing competition in foreign markets. Thus, selling prices had fallen below remunerative levels, and some manufacturers found it increasingly difficult to get a return on the capital that had been introduced in the boom years. All of such claims, with the exception perhaps of the first, are stock features of any wages negotiations. The reference to cost of living was not allowed to pass without comment, and was to draw from the workmen's secretary a statement as to the kind of living a workman was in a position to afford on 30/- per week. Better still, it was to elicit from the enlightened arbitrator some very choice remarks. The professional advocate for the employers had quoted the "Economist" Index Numbers for wholesale prices to prove that the cost of living had declined, which quotations were followed up by the arbitrator in reasoned interrogation.

"Q. (Arbitrator) - I should like to ask Mr. C. whether these are all the articles that constitute the cost of living of the working man.

A. (Mr. C.) - They are the chief articles, wool and cotton represent the clothing.

Q. - Have you any information as to any falling off there might have been in the cost of rent?

A. - There is no such information published that I can see.

Q. \* I notice that you have given me the wholesale price of meat. Have you any information with reference to the retail prices at which working men may be

supposed to buy?

A. - There is no such reliable information published.

Arbitrator. - This is very interesting information and I wish it could be conveyed to our butchers". (1)

As early as 1879, then, index numbers had been employed in wages negotiations to demonstrate relative changes in a workman's normal cost of living. But "cost of living" as we have now grown to realise, is not by any means so definite as to be capable of exposition in the language of statisticians. In 1879, the parties were badly off for any reliable information about retail prices, because there<sup>re</sup> was no official index number to measure their change. All that could be demonstrated by the kind of evidence submitted was that if any brassworker were earning in 1879 the same weekly sum as in 1872 (that is, immediately after the bonus had been conceded), then his "real" wages were higher at the later date if retail prices had followed the same course as wholesale prices. This need not have meant that the brassworker ought not still to be paid a bonus of 15 per cent in 1879.

The Society had not engaged a lawyer to defend the views of the men. But the latter ~~was~~<sup>were</sup> well served in advocacy by their able secretary. He did not seek to dispute that even retail prices may have fallen; instead, he set about demonstrating what a poor sort of living a man with a wife and three children could get on a weekly wage of 30/-. It

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(1) Arbitration Report, 1879.



was assumed that such a figure represented the average weekly earnings of a normal workman if full time were worked. This figure was not based on any calculated average, although it is highly feasible that the manner in which it was shown such income would be spent was based on actual experience of working-class living. Adopting the modern official classification, we may set the result out in the following way:

Items of Expenditure.	Amount.	Percentage.
Food	15/9½	52.6
Rent	4/6	15.0
Clothing	3/6	11.7
Fuel & light	2/-	6.7
Other items	4/2½	14.0
All items	30/-	100.0

"Other Items" included a few shillings for "short time", that part of the weekly income on a full week's work which would be needed at times of slackness, stock-taking and holidays. It also comprised a workman's contribution to his Trade Society and his provision against sickness. Another small item was the few pence for "School Fees". There was no place in such a budget for recreative activities or for beverages - if these were claimed, then some necessities had to be sacrificed. If the bonus of 15% were withdrawn from the total earnings of 30/-, a man's income would range round about 26/-, and his weekly budget of expenditure would have to undergo some modification. W. J. Davis certainly scored in this piece of

evidence, in his illustration of the smallness of the latitude for extravagance.

Yet another part of the proceedings which has implications of far wider significance than the withdrawal of the brassworkers' bonus of 15%, was that concerning increased capital charges. Two very obvious cases were cited. One was that of a firm which had opened up a third set of premises in 1872, because it was getting behind with its orders. The other was of a firm which had opened up a new establishment in 1875 for the manufacture of Chandeliers and Gas-brackets, at an outlay of £16,000. In interrogating the employer in the first of these cases,

W.J.Davis asks: "You say you have a perfect right to expend your capital at your own discretion?"

Answer: "Certainly.

W.J.D.: "But unfortunately in times of depression and adversity, after expending that capital and extending your plant, you want the workman to share your loss, whereas they have no voice whatever in extending your plant and premises. That is the point".

Later in the proceedings, he asks "What would employers say if workmen asked for an increase in bad times in consequence of their having undertaken larger liabilities in the day of prosperity?". He points out also that the workman has such things as fixed establishment charges, such as Rent, School Fees, Sick Club, Coal, which must be borne whether he is in employment or not. The analogy is not, of course, strictly applicable, for an employer's household and his business are separate entities. Nevertheless, this problem of the

direction of private capital investment is one that the community itself may yet have to solve.

In this particular claim for a withdrawal of the bonus, the employers, as has been indicated, were not supported by the whole of the trade. Some of the largest firms in the district had no desire to remove it; they could work for stock. Besides, the Employers' Association accounted for about 27 firms only, out of the 100 or so firms in business in the district. The Association had not gone to great pains in discovering whether there was a general desire for this wage reduction <sup>(1)</sup>; many firms were considered to be too small to be of consequence. It was plain, too, that wage reductions had been effected although the bonus had nominally been retained, since piece work prices had in many cases been reduced after the introduction of the bonus. Neither would the former piece work prices be reinstated if the bonus were withdrawn. There was some doubt as to whether the employers wished for the removal of the bonus so that more trade may be attracted or that they may be recouped for previous losses. W. J. Davis adopted an ingenious method for questioning whether goods were being sold at a loss. He exhibited certain well known lines of brass-ware which he had purchased, and analysed the selling-prices. He had a fairly accurate idea of the labour cost in such manufactures, because he could determine this from the experience of the journeymen, and by allowing a certain estimated percentage for establishment charges, the

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(1) The Secretary of the Employers' Association had sent out 28 circulars. Of these only about 10 were returned.



amount of profit was laid bare. These calculations did not pass without question, but there was no very great anxiety on the part of the employers to allow their account books to be inspected by an accountant from the workmen's side in order that the figures estimated for establishment charges could be refuted. Another reason why some of the workmen were suffering more than the employers, was that the latter were finding it necessary to make goods of lighter pattern. Casters were paid by the hundred-weight, and their piece prices had not been increased although the wages of their underhands, such as coremakers and moulders, had been enhanced. Whereas a coremaker was receiving about 8/- or 9/- a week in 1869, she would be earning 14/- or 15/- in 1879 (1). In other processes of manufacture, where extra facilities had been given for making goods, it was complained that piece-work prices had been reduced by more than in proportion to the extra facilities, hence earnings suffered.

As so small a number of manufacturers were represented at the arbitration, it is difficult to weigh up the evidence; and the Arbitrator must also have been in doubt. The brass trades certainly did feel the effects of depression, but they did not suffer as much as other trades in the district. The brass trades recovered more quickly than others after the depression. The Arbitrator must have been well impressed with the behaviour of the young trade union. Its secretary had pointed out that the undesirable features attaching to other trade societies were absent; there was no claim to restrict

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(1) Given in evidence, Arbitration, 1879.

the number of underhands a journeyman could employ; there was no bid for a minimum wage, a man must earn what he was worth; and there was no anxiety to strike because non-unionists worked alongside unionists. So, it is not surprising that the Arbitrator's award was a compromise. The percentage bonus was to remain, but it was to be reduced to 10%. This decision really <sup>only</sup> covered the parties to the Arbitration, but of course, other firms in the Chandelier and Gasfittings trade followed after this lead. In the letter cited on page 94 it is stated that the cabinet branch was against withdrawal of the bonus. But this impression would seem to have been ill-founded, for later in the year employers in this branch were anxious to reduce the bonus. Although the brass trades recovered fairly quickly from the depression, some sections were more fortunately placed than others. In the Chandelier and Gas-fittings section there was a fair amount of activity in the later part of 1879, but the cabinet section was affected to a greater extent by the depression in the building trades (1). Thus, employers in this section pressed first of all for a reduction of the bonus to 5 % on earnings; this was later modified to a demand for a bonus of 7½%. Eventually, parleys on both sides resulted in adhesion to George Dixon's award in this section of the trade also. Thus the recognised bonus became fixed at 10% for the greater part of the brass trades of the district. It was to remain so for another ten years.

In these ten years, much ground was lost , and the

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(1) Report of Factory Inspector. 1880.

system in the trade relapsed into as chaotic a state as ever. In this decade the hardware district was to experience the worst depression in its history, <sup>so</sup> ~~as~~ that one would hardly expect organised labour to be very effective in its influence on working conditions. The union had become woefully weak. It had been unable to prevent the complete disappearance of the bonus in many cases. Brassworkers lost interest in the union, and competition amongst journeymen had brought piece work <sup>prices</sup> to very low figures. The "garret-master" was also exerting his evil influence, so that even respectable employers were compelled to reduce wages. During these years the process of stamping had become increasingly popular, and the caster was feeling the burden of this competition from less skilled labour. More and more female labour was being introduced into the trade as employers endeavoured to cheapen their labour costs. Not only was female labour being introduced in stamping and pressing operations, but it was to be found also in the polishing shops. Polishing was a dirty, unwholesome and altogether degrading occupation for a woman, and W. J. Davis was constantly agitating against the employment of these "moll-moppers" as they were called. At that time, however, there was less opposition among the men to the employment of women polishers than to the introduction of women to lathe and vice work. This was not attempted generally, but one firm had put women on to such work in the year 1880, and the men had suspended work in protest. Turning at the lathe and filing at the vice was regarded as men's work,



and women's work was lacquering and wrapping-up. The caster making hollow castings engaged his own coremakers, of course, and these were always women and girls. In fact, the caster would not have welcomed boy labour at that work, because the boys as they grew up would wish to pass into the casting shop. On the whole, then, there was a fairly clear line of division in the trade between what was regarded as men's work and what was considered to be women's work. The difficult times experienced in the 'eighties, however, had tempted employers to employ cheaper female labour. Add to all these unfortunate circumstances the fact that in 1883 the brass-workers lost the services of their secretary, and the declining membership of the union is adequately explained (1). In that year W. J. Davis had accepted an appointment as Factory Inspector, through which he was to lay store to a vast amount of very useful experience. But without him, the trade union lapsed into insignificance as a factor in wages regulation. The conciliation arrangement with employers in the "lighting" branch was allowed to lapse in 1884 (2), owing to failing strength of the union and to the smallness in the number of employers who remained organised. The officers of the union became slack after the departure of W. J. Davis, and the two

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(1) Membership of the Birmingham branch after 1879. Annual Reports.

1878-79 - 3,990.	1882-83 - 3,148.	1886-87 - 2,162.
1879-80 - 3,609.	1883-84 - 2,772.	1887-88 - 1,752.
1880-81 - 3,446.	1884-85 - 2,609.	
1881-82 - 3,418.	1885-86 - 2,781.	

(2) Webb Manuscripts.

secretaries, one a general and the other a financial secretary, took little real interest in their work as labour organisers. In 1885, it was found necessary to depose the president on account of his association with the Fair Trade agitation, and dissatisfaction with the whole internal management of the Society led in 1886 to the secession of the four London branches.

Altogether then, the 'eighties were exceedingly difficult years for organised labour in the trade, and the militant spirit of the union gradually subsided. They were not years entirely devoid of incident. There were continual interventions in disputes in the workshops, and in the later 'eighties some attempts were being made to revive the old conciliation machinery. Relations with one firm became quite strained; the firm wished to impose much lower piece-prices than was general in the trade. It also endeavoured to form a Trade Benefit Society within the works, membership of which was not open to trade unionists, and from which out-of-work pay could be obtained. There was much agitation in the case and several unionists were discharged <sup>(1)</sup>. The union was also alert in many cases where piece-prices were concerned; one case, which eventually went to law <sup>(2)</sup>, resulted in a highly important decision, namely, that once a piece-price has been agreed upon, the employer cannot alter it without the consent of the workman concerned. Equalisation of piece-prices was the policy of the union, where practicable, although there

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(1) Annual Reports, 1880-81.

(2) Salt v. Read.

was, as has already been pointed out, no prospect of uniform price lists being arranged.

Late in 1882, however, the first steps had been taken to arrange general minimum piece work prices for castings. The men had drawn up prices which they regarded as suitable for general cabinet castings, and also for chandelier, "common" gas, and general cock work (1). As a result of negotiations with those of the cabinet section employers who remained organised, a short list of minimum prices was arranged. This list was not to be so generally applicable as lists arranged in subsequent years, because the organised employers represented so small a proportion of the many manufacturers in the trade. The arrangement just meant that at a meeting between representatives of the two sides, held on December 19th, 1882, agreement had been reached on certain piece work prices for castings the agreed prices being in all cases except one, 1/- per hundredweight less than the prices which the men had proposed. The men had hoped to secure a uniform 9/- per cwt. for common cabinet castings, but employers were prepared to concede a minimum price of 8/- per cwt. only, and this price went forward as a recommendation to the trade in general. At the meeting it was resolved:

"That a minimum of 8/- per cwt. for Common Castings be recommended to date from 1st January next (1883), and should trade improve

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(1) See Appendix B i. for proposed prices.



in the early part of next year, the Association (1) will be prepared to take the question of a general advance of Bonus to 15 per cent into favourable consideration; the rates for other Castings to be as agreed between the Committee and the Deputation".

The Casting prices recommended under the above resolution were as follows:-

Common Fine Work.

20/- per cwt. Single and Double, all wrought patterns included.

Sash Pulley Wheels.

11/- per cwt. Over 1 inch (under 1 inch to be counted and 2/- per gross paid extra) or per heat of good work.

Tack Work.

9/- per cwt. Screws and Spikes included.

Common Castings.

8/- per cwt.

Shoes and Plates.

10/- per cwt. Dried Moulds.

Jobbing Work.

9/- per cwt. All under 2 dozen to be weighed as jobbing work.

Ventilators.

9/- per cwt.

Running Down Dust.

2/6 per cwt. To be paid on the weight of Metal brought in.

Mixing Metal.

1/- per cwt. To be paid on the weight of Metal brought in.

It was extremely unlikely that these recommended prices were observed generally after 1883, on account of the weakness of the union, the small degree of organisation among employers and the trade depression. The latter, of course, also

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(1) Called Master Brassworkers' Association in the records of the trade union.

prevented the favourable consideration of an advance in bonus as was countenanced in the resolution. The above list of prices applied to the cabinet section only, and no list appears to have materialised in the other branches of the trade.

A dispute in 1883 revealed the weakness of the union. It was a case in which the 10 per cent bonus had been suspended. A lock-out followed, but the workmen defeated their own ends by not remaining loyal to the Society (1). The great depression of 1886, which dragged out over the next two years as well, contributed to the discomfiture of the trade union. Conditions became so serious in 1889, that early in that year the men urgently requested their former secretary to return as their leader. He abandoned a good post, and answered their call. His return was enthusiastically welcomed, and hopes ran high that he would be able to secure the reinstatement of the full 15 per cent bonus. These hopes were to be fulfilled. The energy of the man was so great that before the end of another year, membership of the Society in Birmingham had increased from about 1,800 to nearly 8,000. At a crowded meeting held soon after his return, he had flung out his aims: his words were:

"Keep what you have, get back what you have lost, and go in for that which is reasonable and just". (2)

The return of the former secretary coincided with a revival in trade, which fact aided him considerably in his endeavours to secure a return to the 15% bonus. The procedure adopted was much the same as that of 1872. Circulars were addressed to employers making application for the reinstatement of the full 15% bonus on the first pay-day after

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(1) Annual Report, 1883-84.

(2) W. A. Dalley. Op.cit. p.

February 1st, 1890. The circular sent to employers in the Chandelier, Gas-fittings and Steam-fittings branches was couched in firmer language than that sent to employers in the Cabinet branch; probably the opposition of these employers in 1872 and the Arbitration struggle of 1879, accounted for this pressure. There was little difficulty in obtaining the concession in the cabinet branch of the trade, the matter having been discussed at a meeting of employers' representatives at which W. J. Davis was present. There was only one doubt in the minds of the employers, the eternal question of whether, if the 15 per cent were conceded, all employers, small and large, would be forced to pay it, so that unfair competition should not accrue as a result of the good action of some employers. In order to satisfy them in this direction, W. J. Davis was prepared to give a written guarantee that if the full 15 per cent were reinstated, his union would see that all employers were paying it by Michaelmas 1890. Confidence in his words was such that the employers in the Cabinet branch resolved to raise the bonus from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. This guarantee turned all brassworkers into trade union agitators, because they knew that they would lose their bonus if steps were not taken to make its payment general. Some of the remarks of W. J. Davis in this connection are worth quoting.

"I dare say I shall be asked some important questions, such as these: Can you guarantee the general payment of the bonus? Are the whole of the firms of the town paying now even the 10 per cent? I am bound to say, gentlemen (I intend to be quite frank) there



are many firms, I am sorry to say, who are not paying any bonus at all. That places you in a very awkward position. The men's Society is somewhat responsible for this state of things. If you will recognise the claims of the men, give them a general bonus of 15 per cent. We will pledge ourselves to see that all firms pay the bonus. We propose that if we fail to make the firms pay the full 15 per cent generally, that we will give you full liberty to take it off at the end of the time at which it is stated in the guarantee they shall pay". (1).

Again, a rather bold suggestion was to follow these remarks, a suggestion which had little chance of being taken up, although it was to assume some prominence a few years later.

"If you (employers) would look after your interests a little better by insisting upon those in your employ becoming members of the Brassworkers' Association, you would do it at once. If you would give a guarantee of this kind, you would prevent at one stroke little firms escaping the payment of the bonus; as if men knew that they could only have it by joining the men's association, the result would be that they would all be in, and the industrial prices in very many instances would have to be increased. If you think it is against the principles of Englishmen to dictate as to who shall work for you, non-Society men or Society men, we do not press the point; but if you want to do the work well, and determine to have some regulation in the trade, I do not think you can do it without you recognise that the men's association has to cooperate with you in improving the trade at large". (2)

<sup>is</sup> There was a powerful plea for wholehearted recognition of a Society which had now been in existence for close upon eighteen years and which had shown that it was capable of removing the anomalies that had been rooted in the trade for years. There is no doubt that the union

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(1) W. A. Dalley. pp. 135-136. Op.cit.

(2) Ibid.

had promoted opportunities for journeymen to consult one another in some sort of unofficial works' committees for the fixation of piece-work prices; action of the union had also resulted in progress towards equalisation of piece-work prices. The hope that uniform price lists would be drawn up was still uppermost in the minds of those who guarded the policy of the union. Thus at this meeting with employers in the cabinet branch of the trade, we find W. F. Davis uttering these words:

"We are asking for 5 per cent advance. We only ask for 5 per cent because we want a classification of prices throughout the trade. We want a revision of prices. I am here to propose, on behalf of the men, that a Wages Board, consisting of a number of employers, should regulate the prices of our trade, and so stop the competition which has run mad so long ..... much good would be done."

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(1) Ibid. p. 137.

The idea of such Wages Boards was not an innovation, they had operated with a measure of success in other industries. Discussions for the formation of a Trades Regulation and Conciliation Board for the brass trades had taken place in 1888, when several large employers of labour had met representatives from the Society. Such a Board would have been constituted on the usual lines, an equal number of representatives from each side, with the duty of "arbitrating on all matters affecting the interests of employers and workmen and of assisting in removing or modifying those causes which have proved injurious to the trade."<sup>(1)</sup> From the workmen's point of view, they would aspire to improve matters in three directions. They were anxious that employers should recognise the advantages of a trade union by seeing that all employees were members of it. Thus, it would be feasible for the Society to force all employers to pay the trade bonus. Secondly, the men thought that such a Board may bring about an equalisation of dressing prices for the same make and quality of work, that is, uniform price-lists may be secured. Thirdly, it might be possible to persuade manufacturers to abandon the practice of employing outworkers, and to cease purchasing finished products at very low prices for purposes of re-sale, from "garret-masters" and small shop-owners.

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(1) Annual Reports, 1888 - 89.



This last subject was to be aired quite a lot in Arbitration proceedings in 1900 and 1907. These aspirations all proved rather vain, and none of the three objects was to be achieved through any of the Conciliation Boards which were later set up in the brass trade. It will be seen, though, that although the question of getting the 15 per cent. bonus reinstated engaged the attention of the society for the next year or so, the scheme of a Wages Board had not been entirely forgotten, as it was mentioned during the course of the negotiations with employers in the cabinet section of the trade.

The bonus of 15 per cent. was ensured for workmen in this section of the trade on the first pay-day in February, 1890, that is, on February 8th. But what of their brethren in the other branches of the trade? A little more opposition had been anticipated in this quarter; in fact, the men's application was completely ignored. Employers had been politely reminded that payment of 15 per cent. was expected on February 8th. Impressive and enthusiastic demonstrations were held, but it was necessary for about 1200 workmen to suspend work before the claim was finally conceded. (1) Altogether, 1500 workers were on strike, and it was six weeks before they had all returned and the bonus of 15 per cent. was paid generally. One firm after another gave in to the demands. So, all men in the

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(1) Annual Reports, 1890 - 91.

Cabinet, Chandelier and Gasfittings and Plumbers' brass-foundry trades became entitled again to a bonus of 15 per cent on their earnings. It had been a particularly busy time for W. J. Davis, because he had been one of the outstanding figures in a dispute which had arisen at that time in the <sup>n</sup>Metallie bedsteads trade. Throughout the whole of December, 1889, he had given a young trade union in that industry the benefit of his experience. There had been a strike also, and eventually an arbitration before this dispute was settled.

It had been necessary in the brass trades to adopt a forceful policy in order to revive interest in trade unionism and to repair the drooping fortunes of the Society. Once the full bonus had been secured, attention could be directed to promoting that machinery through which it was hoped the remaining wage problems could be solved. The basic problems had only been touched on the fringe. Only in one small section of the trade had a uniform piece-price list been operative (1). The list for cabinet castings which had been recommended to the trade in 1883 may or may not have been generally operative. In 1890, soon after the return of W. J. Davis, another list for castings covering a wider field

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(1) Viz:- Hinge Dressers' List.

was secured (1). Prices in this list (2), where comparable with those in the list of 1883, were at a higher level. For example, the following prices can be compared:

	<u>1883 List</u> <u>per cwt.</u>	<u>1890 List</u> <u>per cwt.</u>
<u>Fine Work</u> , double faced }	20/- }	21/-
<u>Fine Work</u> , single faced }		18/-
<u>Tack Work</u> ,	9/-	10/6
<u>General Cabinet Work</u> ,	8/-	8/6

The price for Gas, Cock and Fine Brasswork was fixed at 10/- per cwt. In addition to these prices, of course, the caster was entitled to the 15 per cent bonus. Certain incidental charges and regulations entered into this list, providing for working conditions in the trade. The caster was allowed 7lbs. per cwt. for loss of metal in casting (3). He was subject to a fine of 6d. for wilful neglect of fire and pots. Gas, when used was to be charged for at the rate of 1/- per "tub", and 3d. per cwt was to be paid for "shaking" in a barrel by motive power. This list, then, was a good attempt at regulating working conditions in the casting-shops. Again, in considering this list, we should not forget that employers were not well organised and that no stable machinery existed for ensuring that the list prices would be generally observed.

- (1) In the Webb manuscripts, there was a reference to this list, and it was there stated that it had been arranged by a Conciliation Board representing exclusively casters' interests. The Board was reported to have worked well and not to have had occasion to meet after successfully arranging the List. The writer had not discovered any authority in the records of the Society for the statement that a formally constituted Board has been established. It appears that the list was drawn up at a "Special Conference of Employers and Workmen" held on March 1st, and 15th, 1890.
- (2) See Appendix B. 5. for full list.
- (3) See Chapter 7. pp. for explanation.



In the finishing shops there was still much disparity between piece-prices for similar work between factory and factory. The obstacles in the way were three-fold; there was a huge variety of patterns, there was the temptation for journeymen to compete against each other, instead of sticking together, and, finally, there was the small master in the trade who was for ever undercutting to dispose of his wares. There were, moreover, still hundreds of skilled underhands working at surprisingly low rates of wages, while journeymen often reaped disproportionately large rewards. There was still no guarantee that the rate of the flow of labour into the trade was economically justified when such was left under the sole control of journeymen acting independently and guided by no other motive than their own immediate interests. Thus, hope was centred next on the idea of a Conciliation Board, as a possible means of arriving at solutions. The objects of such a Board in the opinion of the men's leaders would be:- avoidance of strikes and lock-outs; trade regulations and avoidance of breach of contract on both sides; the formation of price lists; and the establishment of trade custom <sup>(1)</sup>. The move for the institution of such a Board first came from the operatives. At a meeting held in March, 1891, a deputation was appointed to negotiate in the matter with the Brass Trades Manufacturers' Council. The employers' representatives received the suggestion favourably, and were instructed to proceed to draw up the constitution of such a Board. However, on presentation of the scheme to the trade for acceptance, it was not so enthusiastically welcomed, and it was quite a long time before the actual Board came into existence. This

(1) Annual Reports, 1890-91

attempt to further the cause of amicable collective bargaining certainly revealed how unprepared the employers' organisation was for engaging on such work. In fact, organisation among the employers was very ragged, and the body that did exist claimed only a small membership. Attempts were being made at this time to stimulate more solid organisation, mainly in the chandelier and gasfittings branch of the trade, but the movement had met with little success. Everything had been against the prospect of success, for the small firms had been growing in numbers. It was noticeable that a change had gradually come over the trade, for work had become more specialised and the trade, as a whole, more sectionalised. Small masters were specialising in two or three lines or in parts of composite articles, with the result that the larger concerns experienced much keener competition, and combination amongst employers was not likely to prove effective. To protect themselves, the larger manufacturers had found it necessary to purchase from these smaller men,<sup>(1)</sup> and thus, instead of competing and driving them out of the market, they actually kept the smaller firms going. Employers were never able to work together for very long, and it was hoped in some quarters that a better spirit would result from the renewed efforts to promote common interests in a trade association.

A contemporary press article put the whole matter in a

(1) "Birmingham Daily Post" - May 18th, 1896.

nutshell, for, after mentioning the attitude of the men, it proceeded: "..... and it is to be hoped that in their own interests, the manufacturers will prove equally reasonable, and will consent finally to lay aside the mutual antagonisms and jealousies which have hitherto prevented the establishment of a really solid and effectual employers' association." (1) An adequate measure of support, though, came from the employers for the project to be launched, and before the end of 1891, the Amalgamated Brass Trades' Board of Conciliation was in being.

The Board consisted of an equal number of representatives of employers and workmen, and the number of representatives from any branch of the trade was to depend on the relative importance of that branch according to the number of workpeople employed in it. Thus, there were two representatives from each side for any section of the trade, if the numbers employed in that section were over 500 and less than 1500, and three representatives if more than 1500. Strikes and lock-outs were taboo; when a dispute occurred, attempts must first of all be made to settle the matter by direct negotiation between the organisations; if this brought no result, the matter was to be considered by a General Purposes Committee of the Board which was comprised of five representatives from each side. Failing a settlement in this Committee

(1) "Birmingham Daily Post" - October 30th, 1891. Also quoted by Dalley, Op. cit., p. 172.



the whole Board was to discuss the dispute, the Chairman having the right to vote. If no decision emerged from these deliberations, an arbitrator was to be appointed by the Board, and his ruling was to be binding for at least twelve months. Besides the General Purposes Committee, upon which also devolved the duty of examining the accounts of the Board, there were to be Trade Committees to look after sectional interests. These were also to contain a balance between employers and workmen-representatives, and it was hoped that one of their main duties would be the preparation of piece-work price-lists for each branch of the trade. (1)

Such was the constitution of this body from which so much was expected. The idea of conciliation and arbitration had long appealed to W. J. Davis, but this scheme was a vast improvement on the agreement he had effected with the Chandelier and Gasfittings Trade Employers' Association in 1874. This new Board had occasion to meet ten times during its first year<sup>e</sup> of existence in 1892<sup>(2)</sup>, and had to its credit another general<sup>piece-work</sup> price-list in the brass trades, for the manufacture of sash fasteners, which was then an important branch of manufacture. The drawing up of this list was an intricate business on account of the hundreds of patterns in the catalogues of manufacturers. By making a collection of a large sample of sash fasteners, the

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(1) Annual Report, 1891 - 92.

(2) Ibid, 1892 - 93.

representatives of both men and employers were able to compare one pattern with another and so arrive at a classification of them which would enable uniform piece-work prices to be paid for work which was considered to be of approximately equal skill. The list for hinge dressing was an achievement but this list was a far greater one, since it covered so diverse a range of designs. Apart from this list, nothing really materialised from the Board and it was never called upon to settle any major dispute in the trade. The Board did not survive for long as an effective instrument in the trade. Possibly, the slackness of trade through 1892 and 1893 accounted for this, although inadequacy of organisation in the ranks of the employers was an equally sound reason why it should not have functioned with satisfaction. The decline in trade activity was not sufficient to make any inroad upon the recognised 15 per cent bonus but there was no doubt that the payment of the bonus was evaded in some instances. All sections of the trade were not suffering any great falling off in demand throughout 1893; the gas and electric light fittings departments gave fairly steady employment but the cabinet branch was exceptionally dull (1) and a great deal of short time was necessary. Brassworkers suffered, then, from short time and earning capacity was impaired in that way.

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(1) Correspondents' Monthly Reports on Birmingham and Wolverhampton Districts. "Labour Gazette". 1893.

During these years, the Society had been devoting considerable attention to another aspect of wages ~~and~~ negotiations, namely the feasibility of establishing a standard minimum rate of wages as a protection for the lower paid workmen. In 1892, W. J. Davis had collected some evidence as to working conditions in various branches of the trade, which revealed how chaotic conditions really were. It also revealed changes in methods of production, especially in much of the common brassfoundry business, where more and more machine work had been introduced leading to the employment of less skilled hands, both male and female. Many establishments had been expanding and there was a greater amount of sub-division of labour. This was especially the case in the chandelier, gasfittings and electric light fittings (1) branch of the trade, where, in some of the common varieties of articles, it was a question of making up the finished product from the machined parts. This, in the opinion of the men would not have rendered it impossible to draw up price lists for the trade as a whole. In the plumbers' brassfoundry trade, there was a greater proportion

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(1) The introduction of electric lighting in the "eighties" had opened up new avenues of business for the "lighting" branch of the brass trades and this branch of the trades was busy in the early as well as in the later 'nineties. In 1881, W. J. Davis had visited the Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, in order that he could report on its possible future influence on the brass trades. It was his opinion then, that the new development augured well for the brassworker.

~~(Note on introduction of Electric Light Fittings. Ref. to Crystal Palace Exhibition 1881.)~~



of daywork than in any other section and in this case it was want of faith in each other among the men that seemed the main obstacle to the formulation of a price list for piece-workers. One type of labour in the brass trades was rapidly dropping out of existence, for polishing was taking the place of burnishing. In the casting shops, day wages and piece prices differed greatly from factory to factory. So, if piece-price lists were not going to materialise, the only possible type of protection was a minimum rate of wages to be operative throughout the trade. But this was not going to prove easy of attainment; not only would trade conditions not warrant the attempting of such a measure at that time, but it was possibly too much of an innovation to hope for in a trade in which the journeyman system still predominated and in which it was practically an impossibility to <sup>classify</sup> ~~sealify~~ the skill of workmen. Thus, although the men's leaders had accepted the idea as a way out of their struggle against "sweated" conditions they hesitated to bring the question forward as a part of their policy. Before the storm on this subject was to break, the percentage bonus was to undergo a further revision. The need for equalisation of piece-prices was not altogether forgotten, for sectional committees of the union were constantly agitating in this direction. Journeymen were urged to adopt a greater degree of firmness in their contracts with masters, and to refuse to work at any prices which would not yield at least 6d. per hour plus the bonus.

Some benefit was also derived from the practice of forming informal factory pricing committees, where, through consultation among journeymen, it was possible for men to present a more solid front to the management. The functions of these factory committees included the pricing of work, the keeping of members out of arrears of contribution and generally looking after the interests of members in the shops.

Conditions of trade did not improve until 1896; but even then there was no agitation for a minimum rate of wages. The reason for this further delay was perhaps not so much "fitness of time" according to conditions of trade, as lack of organisation on the employers' side. The Conciliation Board of 1892 had ceased to count and with a disunited body of employers there was little possibility that the payment of a minimum wage would be recognised. A bonus was something more tangible; it was better to aim at increasing that and to press for machinery which would stimulate organisation on the employers' side than to go straight ahead with a new scheme of wages regulation. In this view, the leaders in the brass trades could draw inspiration from conditions in the metallic bedstead trade, where manufacturers had combined solidly in an Association and had entered into a close alliance with the workmen's association. In this industry, piece-work also predominated but there was no attempt made to draw up a general price list;

wages were varied by means of a percentage bonus, the amount of which was altered as the bedstead manufacturers altered the selling price of bedsteads. No Alliance of this kind was ever to be formed in the <sup>c</sup>abinet, gas-fittings and plumbers' brassfoundry trades, although similar experiments were made for a year or two in <sup>the</sup> heavier metal and tube departments, with cased tubes and stair rods, with bedstead mount and fender-support manufacture and with edffin furniture manufacture. (1) Although W. J. Davis was intimately connected with these Trade Alliances, (1) he was fully aware that there were so many small firms in existence that the necessary degree of organisation on the manufacturers' side would never have been obtainable, in order that such Alliances could be formed in the three sections of the brass trades. Thus, the minimum rate project was shelved for a while and the union claimed an increase in the percentage bonus, additional advances to the younger and lower paid workmen and fuller recognition of the union. Furthermore, it was to advocate the formation of Boards of Conciliation in all sections of the trade with a view to promoting more effective organisation on both sides.

In 1896, then, another agitation was set on foot for an advance in the percentage bonus. As has been pointed out, conditions of trade were not good in 1892 and 1893 and

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(1) For an account of the organisation of these Alliances, see Chapter 10. p. 417 et seq.



<sup>the</sup><sub>n</sub> brass trades did not become really busy until the autumn of 1895. It is true that in some sections there had been a fair amount of activity but whereas employment might be good one month, it was often just as bad the next. The men in the "lighting" branches did not suffer as much as their fellows in the cabinet section. For the greater part of the time, employment in this branch was slack. In the early part of 1895, it had been adversely affected by the great frost (1) which had held up operations in the building trades; but this had had the opposit<sup>e</sup> effect on the water fittings branch. In fact, the plumbers' branch was the only one that was getting really busy early in 1895, and improvement<sup>generally</sup><sub>n</sub> had to await the fall of the year. Throughout September, overtime was worked in the gas fittings shops, as a result of new work created by the introduction of the penny-in-the-slot meters (2). But, although this circumstance, like the heavy frost, was more or less accidental, conditions later in the year were visibly improving and all branches experienced full employment. Such improvement, led to a shorter stoppage than usual for the Christmas holidays, (3) and happenings of that kind were not likely to escape notice by the operatives. It was plain that employers were doing more business and the brassworkers were not going to be long in making a claim for

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(1) "Labour Gazette" March 1895 and April 1895.

(2) Ibid. October 1895.

(3) Ibid. January 1896.

a share in this prosperity.

Actually the agitation arose in the factories (1) for in the autumn of 1895, factory committees had informed union headquarters of increasing business and advocated an application for an advance in wages. It was feared then that reaction may set in after Christmas and no action was taken. (2) Later, the position was again reviewed by the factory committees and there was then no doubt that trade had sufficiently recovered to warrant an application for an increase in wages. So the Society framed a demand for an advance in bonus ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> 25 per cent and for an additional advance for those who were earning low wages. At a general meeting of brassworkers held on May 18th, 1896, it was resolved :

"That the time has arrived for an increase in brassworkers wages and prices and that the Executive be requested to (a) make an application for an advance of 10 per cent on the earnings of all brassworkers; and (b) to secure by negotiation an additional advance to those members who were receiving very low wages and prices." (3)

This resolution was notified by circular to employers in the trade, as there was no organisation through which the application could be presented. No mention of increasing trade activity was made in the circular; the only reason being given was that wages had risen in other trades and that a further advance was due to the brassworkers. It

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- (1) "Birmingham Mail". May 18th, 1896. Also, "Birmingham Daily Post", May 19th, 1896.
  - (2) "Birmingham Mail" May 18th, 1896.
  - (3) Ibid.

was submitted in the circular that employers had urged and workmen had admitted "that the intricacies of the trade, with its multitude of patterns, its many degrees of finish, its variety of quantities and appliances, make, where so much piece-work prevails, such a thing as a "log" or price-list impracticable." Then it went on to say, "this being so, the only effective way of regulating the price of labour is by a percentage. A percentage", it said, "reaches all and supports the contention of manufacturers that merit in workmanship should be fully recognised."

This circular was sent out on June 13th and the advance was demanded from July 2nd. Altogether, a good deal of public interest was aroused in this agitation and the newspapers were keen in bringing before the public full particulars of all the latest moves and of the opinion of the employers. Everything was in favour of the men; they knew perfectly well that employers could not afford to forego the good orders that were flowing in. Besides, labour was scarce on account of the boom in the cycle industry. This industry was attracting labour at a rapid rate and in fact an increase in wages had already been gained by cycle-workers. Speculation was rife as to how the employers would treat the demand, as they certainly were in no hurry to consider the matter and to proceed to any sort of combined action (1). The general feeling among them was that the demand was excessive and that

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(1) "Birmingham Gazette" June 20th, 1896.



although more orders were being executed, selling prices had not shown any marked increase because competition was so keen. Further, the opinion was expressed that an increased wages bill together with the increased cost of materials following the rise in the prices of copper and spelter (1) since the opening of the year, would necessitate such an enhancement of selling prices as would cause a big falling off in demand. There were also the usual complaints against foreign competition. Some employers drew attention to the fact that the bonus was not the great advantage it was always thought to be because dressing prices were often reduced to compensate for it and because in the pricing of new work the bonus was always taken into consideration. (2) Thus, it was contended by one employer that "dressing prices.. have suffered to a greater extent than the much-vaunted 15 per cent bonus and the old firms whose prices have been in existence a whole decade are left stranded high and dry and the trade transferred to new houses who have no traditional prices to hamper them." (3) Not only did this tendency affect the employer who maintained his former piece-work prices but wages suffered also. The bonus accentuated "the difference between prices already painfully differentiated." (4)

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- (1) At January 2nd, 1896, the price of copper was £41. 7. 6. per ton and by June 15th it had risen to £50. 7. 6. (Birmingham Gazette, March 26th, 1897.) Spelter had also increased in price to the extent of £5. per ton in the same period. (Birmingham Argus, June 15th, 1896.)
- (2) "Birmingham Post", June 10th, 1896.
- (3) Correspondence in "Birmingham Post", May 20th, 1896.
- (4) Ibid.

References were also made to the increase in the number of small specialist firms, which was attributed in some measure to the speculation<sup>on</sup> aroused after the fall of a big copper syndicate in 1888. (1) This body had artificially raised the price of raw materials, so that when these became cheaper after its collapse, it may have been that more of these smaller firms were attracted into the competitive arena. Anyway, unregulated competition had contributed to selling prices with not a large margin for profit. On the whole, then, it was felt among employers that the men had taken an unreasonable advantage of the improvement in trade. (2)

The employers were made to feel the disadvantage of not being organised and their difficulty lay in their "having to meet an organised force with a disunited army." (3) Not only was combination lacking between one branch of the trade and another but there was none either between manufacturers within the same branch. So, when they were all confronted with this application for an advance in bonus one waited for the others to make a move and the day when the union had requested payments of the extra wages was

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(1) "Birmingham Gazette" June 15th, 1896.

Also, Report of Chief Inspector of <sup>Factories</sup> ~~Mines~~, 1889. p 25

(2) "Birmingham Gazette". June 16th, 1896.

(3) Ibid.

> Addendum to (1). The Copper "Ring" had raised prices to about £95 per ton in 1888, but after its collapse the price fell as low as £38. It rose steadily after that with increasing demands and reached £47 in 1889.

drawings very close when employers began to associate together to discuss the situation. It became known that, although some employers were opposed to the demands, the majority were inclined to favour compromise and it was rumoured on all sides that employers were prepared to go as far as a 5 per cent addition, to bring the bonus up to 20 per cent. On June 23rd, about twenty of the leading manufacturers in the gas and water fittings branch met to give consideration to the matter and this meeting was followed a few days later by a larger one at which nearly one hundred manufacturers were present. On the following day, the cabinet and general brass-founders met and decided to negotiate with the men in informal committee. The two wings of the trade were acting separately but it was expected that what happened in one branch would influence the course of events in the other and this proved to be the case. In the first place, the gas and water fittings' manufacturers refused to grant a 10 per cent advance but offered to increase the bonus to 20 per cent. There was a more marked division of opinion among the cabinet employers and many were opposed to any advance but they decided to offer the men the same terms as had been offered in the other section. In this offer they had made one reservation, that the advance should not be paid until September, because it was stated that orders had been accepted on the basis of current rates of wages.

But the operatives had been firm in their demands



for a 10 per cent advance and as the executives had been instructed to proceed on these <sup>1</sup> lines not only in Birmingham but also in other parts of the country, they were not disposed to accept the 5 per cent unconditionally. The position was again reviewed by the men's representatives, who drew up the terms on which they would accept such a compromise.. These were:

- (1) That the advance in bonus should be paid to members of the union only.
- (2) That employers' associations be formed in the various branches of the trade in order that effective Boards of Conciliation may be established.

The men were advocating organisation of employers because they felt that a greater measure of justice would result from a body of employers than from negotiations with individual employers. The idea of Conciliation Boards had always appealed to W. J. Davis but at this time his convictions had been strengthened as a result of the experiences of the working of the Industrial Alliance in the metallic bedstead industry. (1) The men's conditions were not palatable to the employers, but the latter could not entertain the prospect of a long conflict at a time when their order books were overflowing. After a discussion, lasting two and a half hours, at a large and representative gathering of the gas and water fittings manufacturers, held on June 29th, the men's conditions were conceded. The actual terms of the settlement in this branch of the trade were :

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(1) See Chapter 10. p 417 et seq.

- (1) The bonus to be raised to 20 per cent., such increase to be payable immediately, (that is, on July 10th. )
- (2) A Masters' Association to be formed.
- (3) The advance to be paid to union women only.
- (4) Brassworkers who were not already members of the union (and it was estimated that there were about 1,500 of these), to be given one month to join. The advance was not to be withheld from them immediately but if at the end of one month they could show no evidence of membership, then the advance would be withdrawn so that they would only be entitled to 15 per cent bonus. (1)

At the same time, the employers decided to notify customers that selling prices would be increased by 10 per cent. (by reducing trade discounts), to recoup manufacturers for the increase in cost of materials and labour. The men had placed the same terms before the cabinet brassfounders who had likewise surrendered. In their case, a little indulgence was granted on the score that trade recovery had been delayed in this branch. The extra bonus in the cabinet branch was to become payable after August 6th. A further feature of the settlement was that there should be an additional advance of 5 per cent to day-workers over 18 years of age.

There was divided opinion in the town upon the fairness of the settlement. Generally, it was thought to be a reasonable conclusion to the agitation, although there was some misgiving about the justness of the principle that only union men should derive the benefit of the extra bonus. This part of the settlement was described in the leading article of one local paper as an "invidious and abnoxious condition"(2)

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(1) "Birmingham Post", June 30th, 1896.

and was vigorously denounced as a restriction which "involved an interference with freedom of contract in the interests of the union". It was certainly the most striking part of the agreement and if it stood condemned in the eyes of the individualist, it was supported by the union on the ground that only union men should benefit from concessions obtained by the union.

The union derived tremendous benefit from the condition; in order to facilitate its operation, payment of the usual entrance fee was suspended and membership increased by leaps and bounds. Since the return of W. J. Davis in 1889, when he had succeeded in the short space of about six months in bringing the membership in Birmingham from about 1,800 to 8,000, the membership had declined and fluctuated round about 4,000 or 5,000. At the <sup>e</sup>nd of 1895, the numbers on the Birmingham books were 4,538; a year later, the figure was 8,257 ! (1) Similarly, in the Wolverhampton branch, numbers increased from 254 to 357, at Willenhall from 37 to 99, whereas at Walsall, there was <sup>to be</sup> a greater revival still. Here membership had fallen to as low as 6 by the end of 1895; it was no better a year later but by the close of 1897, there were 57 members, to be followed by a 100 per cent increase in the ensuing year, to bring the branch membership up to 114. (2)

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(1) Annual Reports 1897.

(2) Annual Reports.



The concession can only be regarded as a recognition of the union but grudgingly given, and later on, employers regretted their action in entering into such an understanding. In fact, there seems to be some evidence that the condition was ignored by many employers. The question was contested again after the lapse of a few years. In arbitration proceedings in 1900, there was some discussion as to whether the extra amount of bonus was involved or whether the principle applied to the whole 20 per cent. Evidence was submitted by W. J. Davis which proved conclusively that there had been agreement to restrict the additional 5 per cent. to union members. (1) The following circular, under the signature of a leading employer in the cabinet branch of the trade, put in by the men's secretary, established the point. It read :

"July 14th, 1896. At a General Meeting of the trade, held at the Grand Hotel on Tuesday afternoon, June 30th, 1896, Mr. J. H. C. (a leading employer) in the chair, it was resolved :

- (1) The advance of bonus from 15 per cent to 20 per cent commences on the 1st August, according to pay day;
- (2) An Employers' Association to be formed with a Committee to act with the men's Society on questions affecting the whole trade.
- (3) The extra bonus of 5 per cent to be paid to members of the Amalgamated Society of Brassworkers, only; but the brassworkers who are not members of the Society and who are not receiving the extra bonus, shall remain as at present employed." (2).

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- (1) By increasing the bonus from 15 per cent to 20 per cent, it was not, of course, equivalent to a 5 per cent advance on total earnings.
  - (2) Arbitration Report, 1900. First Day, p 22. Contemporary newspaper reports supply overwhelming evidence in support of the fact that the principle was a definite condition of the settlement and that the concession applied only to the additional 5 per cent.

The underlying principle was to be the subject of contention again in 1907, when an arbitrator's award was to reject it altogether.

Another important point in the agreement concerned employers' associations and Conciliation Boards. The year 1896 was favourable for the adoption of such schemes, for it was the year which saw the Conciliation Act go on to the Statute Book. The brass trades were going to have another attempt at applying the principles of organised conciliation and negotiation. The former Board had not proved successful, largely because employers were too poorly organised and because they were sectional in outlook. The brassworkers in all sections of the trade worked together as one body but they had to deal with employers in what were virtually three separate trades. There was some measure of collusion between manufacturers of chandeliers, gas and electric light fittings and manufacturers of water and steam fittings but the cabinet branch was entirely distinct and for all practical purposes, the three sections, with the many sub-sections, could be regarded as separate entities. That was one reason why one Conciliation Board had not been able to function successfully. The new arrangement provided for organisation of employers in three departments and there was to be a Board for each branch. "Hitherto, the masters in the brass trade" had "failed to find a basis of common interest upon which they

could associate themselves", (1) and now they were called upon by the union to remedy matters ! By the end of July, steps had been taken to form a Master Brassfounders' Association for cabinet, naval, art and general brassfounders. Its objects were :

- "(1) To afford members of the trade an opportunity for interchange of views and for the discussion of any questions generally affecting the trade.
- (2) The adjustment of difficulties between masters and men, as and when they arise.
- (3) To appoint masters' representatives to act upon a conciliation board.
- (4) To assist the men in obtaining general payment of the bonus." (2).

Those employers who had first met together to consider the men's application for a 10 per cent advance, naturally took the initiative and invited others in the trade to cooperate in the project. Similar organisations sprang up in the other sections and in 1897, the Conciliation Boards were in full working order. The usual type of rules were drawn up with regard to disputes and suspension of work and the three Boards were registered under the Conciliation Act, so that recourse to arbitration under the sponsorship of the Board of Trade was to be the ultimate fate of any unsettled dispute.

The Boards are reported to have worked well.<sup>(3)</sup> Before twelve months had elapsed, they had tackled the question of casters' piecework prices and a price-list for castings,

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(1) "Birmingham Mail", July 1st, 1896.  
 (2) Ibid.  
 (3) Annual Reports, 1897 - 98.



applicable to the three branches of the trade, came into operation on October 16th, 1897. There were four main divisions in the list (1);

- (1) Chandeliers and Lamps,
- (2) Common Gas Work,
- (3) Cook and Plumbers' Work,
- (4) Cabinet Castings,

In addition to his earnings on the prices in the list, the caster was to receive the 20 per cent bonus. For most classes of work, the prices were per hundredweight, although in some cases they were per pound. One price in the chandelier and lamp section was per dozen (2), and in the common gas list, rings under six inches were to be paid for at the rate of 1d. each and weight. This combination of number and weight was also included for odd moulds. <sup>u</sup>Thus, in the chandelier and lamp list, odd moulds were to be paid for at the rate of 3d. each and weight when under 5lbs. to the dozen. An odd mould was not defined in the same way in the

(1) See Appendix B.6 for full list.

(2) "Pulley Bowls" in fine" - 8d. per dozen.

"common" gas list; in that list, the price was the same, 3d. each and weight but all under 2 dozen constituted an odd mould. It must be remembered that articles were in their rough ~~shape~~<sup>state</sup> as they left the casting shop; they then had to be weighed-in by the rough-warshouse-man and he had to reject any faulty castings before they proceeded to the dressing and finishing shops. The caster was expected to change such faulty work; but it was definitely provided in the list that no work could be returned to the caster if it had undergone the processes of turning or screwing. If it had been edged only, then it could be returned to the caster to be replaced. Another feature of the list was that the caster was to make no payment from his earnings for the use of the sand-mill or for gas or for barrelling. The latter was a method of edging ~~small~~ castings of a small nature, by revolving them in a barrel. It took the place of juvenile labour formerly employed in filing off the protruding edges of the rough castings.

The list went beyond fixing minimum piece-work prices (1), and provided the first standard daywork rates that had ever been recognised in the brass trades. These were 36s. per week, plus the bonus of 20 per cent for the first workman (tha

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- (1) The list was operative in Birmingham only. In other parts of the country, the caster was not always paid by weight. In the brass-casting shops at Rotherham, for example, the caster was paid so much per "heat". In a week, he would probably get t rough 20 to 30 "heats" and the general district rate was about 1s.3d. per "heat". The price per "heat" was not the same for all classes of work however.

is, the head caster) and 32s. per week plus bonus for the second hand (~~this~~<sup>or</sup> is, the moulder.) There was no distinction drawn between day-workers engaged on "common" work and day-workers on what was regarded as "fine" work. Both were rated at the same figure. Day-workers in the casting shops were not a numerous class (that is, apart from the moulders and gelpers, who were rated and paid by the head caster) and casters generally earned higher wages than the minimum of 36s. plus bonus. Another provision in the list marked an innovation in the trade. That was that overtime for the caster was to be paid at the rate of time-and-a-quarter, both for day-work and piece-work. The question of overtime for pieceworkers was always a debateable one, seeing that a pieceworker's hours of labour were not always regular and in the absence of any specific agreement as to normal hours of labour, it was not always easy to say when he had "made" any overtime. Usually, however, a pieceworker's time was recorded as well as that of a dayworker and he was expected to conform to the recognized hours of work. These had been 53 or 54 per week for many years in the brass trades, although the casters' hours did not always coincide with that time. On ~~the~~<sup>the</sup> whole, this casters' list represented a tremendous advance in the direction of a more equitable wages system. Here was the beginning of real collective bargaining in the brass trades.

But nothing was done in the other departments where



the pieceworker was more liable to suffer from the abuses attributable to piecework operation. In the dressing, finishing and polishing processes it was a much more difficult task to arrange price lists. Differences in design and pattern did not prevent the adoption of a uniform list for casting, since payment was by weight of castings. Methods of casting were more or less the same in all casting shops, although the furnaces might have been more up to date in some establishments than in others. Such could not be said for the later processes of manufacture. While the most recent type of lathe might have been in use in one establishment, one might have seen a treadle-lathe (1) still being used in another. Process work in some factories had resulted in a greater sub-division of labour, whereas in other works a workman might be responsible for several operations right up to finishing and making-up. In some works, the newest types of stamps and presses would be seen but in others they would be of the most primitive kind. In some factories, the edging would<sup>be</sup> accomplished by the power-driven emery-wheel, while in others, it was still a boy's monotonous task, by filing. When these conditions are considered in conjunction with the great multiplicity of patterns, one does not have to seek far for a reason for the inability to establish uniform price-lists for finishing and dressing.

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(1) Case cited in Factory Insp. Report 1906 of a woman who had been working for 45 years on a treadle-lathe in a Birmingham Brassfoundry.

About the time of which we are now writing, attention was being drawn in other quarters to the disabilities of the piece workers in industry generally. Often piece workers were not aware of the price they were going to receive for the work on which they were engaged; sometimes, even when the price had been the result of a specific bargain, it was subsequently modified at the whim of the management. In the Factory Act of 1891, some protection against such anomaly had been afforded certain textile workers, reelers, winders and weavers, and in the Factory Bill of 1895, a <sup>clause</sup> ~~change~~ was inserted whereby such protection was to be extended to all textile pieceworkers. Here was an opportunity for doing good service on behalf of the thousands of pieceworkers in other trades. Memorials were addressed from several towns advocating the further extension of the Particulars Clause, as it came to be called, to non-textile factories and workshops, so that pieceworkers generally may be fully aware of the remuneration to which they were entitled, and that their contracts may be respected. It was Henry B<sup>rod</sup>~~rad~~hurst's pleasure to move the amendment to the clause concerned so that non-textile factories might be included. Thanks to his agitation, the non-textile factories were brought within the compass of this legislative protection. If any trade could prove that pieceworkers had no access to information with regard to piecework prices for the work upon which they were engaged, then the Home Office could make an Order for ensuring that full

particulars should be made available. Especial mention is made of the Brass trades by the factory inspector for the Birmingham District in his report to the Chief Inspector for 1895. He wrote :

"With particular reference to the brassworkers, it appeared to me that ~~there~~<sup>there</sup> certainly existed in some classes of factories a necessity that the men should be more carefully and strictly informed at what rate of wages they were being employed and if the Government assumes to itself the duty of interfering in questions of this nature, it appears to me that it would do so beneficially in such cases as in those already dealt with in the textile trades." (1)

In 1896, a move was made by the Brassworkers' Society to obtain the benefit of a Partulars Order for the brass trades, but after investigation, the Home Office decided that such a step was unnecessary. It was found that generally the workmen, even if they were not in possession of a piece price work-book themselves, had access to such a record, if they desired. (2)

It was to be another eleven years before the brassworkers were to be successful in their application for the privileges granted under Section 116 of the Factory and Workshops Act of 1901, which was the corresponding clause in the later consolidating act. The section had already been applied then to a few other metal trades in the district. It was operative in the manufacture of iron and steel cables and chains, anchors and cart-gear (3),; of locks, latches and

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(1) Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, 1895. p. 28.

(2) Annual Reports 1896-97; 1897-98.

(3) Orders dated August 10th, 1897 and July 14th, 1902.



keys (1); and of steel pens (2);. After further agitation by the trade union, the Order applying the Particulars Clause to the brass trades was made on September 23rd, 1907; outworkers as well as inworkers were included under its provisions. Particulars of the rate of wages could be communicated in the ordinary way by placard or note when the work was given out, or by note given to the worker at the time of employment and on <sup>every</sup> subsequent occasion when the rates were to be fixed or altered. A special provision was inserted by virtue of which, by agreement between the employer and the workman, in the case of work of a novel character for which no rate had been fixed, particulars of the rate could be communicated on the completion of the work.<sup>(3)</sup>

Difficulties were encountered in carrying out the Orders in most of the metal trades to which it had been applied. In the lock trade it was the small workshop that upset the smooth working of the Order; in the chain trade it was the domestic workshop and the prevalence of outwork that proved a hindrance to its observance; while in the brass trades, it was the sub-contracting system and the multiplicity of piecework prices ~~that~~ impeded its proper application. The first offence under the Order, though, did not occur until July 14th, 1909. (4). The method of

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- (1) Orders dated August 20th, 1897 and July 14th, 1902.
  - (2) Order dated July 12th, 1900.
  - (3) Report of Chief Inspector of Factories, 1907, p xxviii.
  - (4) Annual Reports 1909 - 10.

making piecework prices publicly known by placard was far from popular in the brass trades. Journeymen were not keen on their underhands knowing the prices that the management was paying for the work. Besides, a placard needed to be rather large if it was to accommodate all the prices in operation. For instance, the factory inspector reported having seen one placard 5 feet two inches by 2 feet, prepared for some thousands of prices in a women's workshop. (1) The most likely method for adoption was that in which the pieceworkers were in possession of a work-book in which all prices were entered as agreed upon. In some cases, such books had been kept previous to the Particulars Order. So, although the pieceworker in the dressing and finishing shops was not to achieve uniform piecework price lists, he was to be protected from cheating on the part of the management by removal of any uncertainty as to the amount of any particular piece price. The brassworker could thank his trade union even for this, since without the agitation of the Society, he would probably not have gained this measure of protection.

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v) Report of Chief Inspector of Factories. 1908. p. 53.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Minimum Rate Agitation and Arbitration.

- (1) The Arbitration of 1900.
- (11) The Arbitration of 1907.



CHAPTER 5.MINIMUM RATE AGITATION AND ARBITRATION.(1) The Arbitration of 1900.

In our enthusiasm for the protection of the pieceworker, we have pressed ahead a few years, and have passed over what is perhaps the most significant event in the long course of collective bargaining in the brass trades. It will now be necessary to recall what was in the minds of the men's leaders about the year 1892. They had then turned their thoughts to the question of a standard minimum rate, as a remedy for the existence of "sweating" in the trade, but had not taken any definite action in the matter until conciliation machinery had been repaired and the bonus advanced. After the advance in bonus in 1896, they began to frame a definite Minimum Rate policy. A Minimum Rate Committee was engaged on this task from the year 1898, and diligently collected evidence relating to most branches of the brass trade. The aim in view was a Minimum Rate for all brassworkers over 21 years of age of 6d. per hour plus bonus, which amounted to 32/5d. for a full week's work, as hours of labour were generally 54 per week and the bonus was at the rate of 20 per cent. A report was prepared, and, arising out of this, a definite programme was adopted by a representative gathering of workmen held in November, 1899. According to the opening lines of this report, there were

three main obstacles to the attainment of a minimum rate of wages. These were, (1) "blind" piece-work, (2) employment by pieceworkers of underhand labour, and (3) the subdivision of labour. By "blind" piece-work was meant the highly undesirable practice against which the Particulars Clause in the Factory Act was meant to combat. "Blind" piece-work was that in which a workman was never sure of the piece-price he was to receive. If the system of working was to remain piece-work, then prices should not be fixed without consultation between the journeyman and the management. In the minds of the men, this question was closely associated with the big debts that some journeymen incurred with the employer.<sup>(1)</sup> A journeyman was often unable to earn his "draw" because piece prices were inadequate or because piece-prices were sometimes altered at the sole wish and discretion of the management.<sup>(2)</sup> The dangers inherent in the second obstacle, that of the sub-contracting system, have already been outlined, and we find it admitted by W. J. Davis that there was "a system of underhand labour which was ("is" in original) degrading to the trade."<sup>(3)</sup> However, there was not published desire to abolish the system, there was no objection to it provided a piece-worker knew his prices and was given the opportunity of arranging them with the manufacturer.<sup>(4)</sup> The Minimum Rate Scheme, however, was going to

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(1) See Chap. 2(1) on Sub-contracting System, pp. 43-4.

(2) Arbitration Report, 1900. First Day.

(3) Report of meeting held at Town Hall, Nov. 16, 1899.

(4) Arbit. Rep. 1900.

include a claim for a regulation of the number of underhands a journeyman may employ. The third great evil, for which it was hoped a minimum rate would provide a remedy was the ever-increasing sub-division of labour, "a method by which men earned ("earn" in original) low wages instead of becoming mechanics".<sup>(1)</sup> This accusation was mainly aimed at establishments where daywork prevailed, for in the report mentioned above it is said that "many day-workers are the dupes of the sub-division of labour, and the fact that boys come into the trade which has been an open industry for years, because they can earn high wages when young, has militated against their chances of becoming mechanics. To earn these high wages they have been kept at one process of work, only to find that when manhood has come, they are unable to earn much more than in their youth."<sup>(2)</sup> The system of daywork had been spreading, but was still less important than piecework. The economies to be derived from the division of labour were also bound to result in an extension of process work and the partial disappearance of the all-round highly-skilled mechanics. Even so, there seemed to the men no reason why a workman who had reached the age of 21 should not earn at least 32/5d. Of course, it was very much open to question ~~and~~ whether a workman of 21 was necessarily worth that amount of wages.

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(1) Mr J. Davis at Meeting in Town Hall.

(2) The Minimum Rate Report dated Oct. 31, 1899.  
(Brassworkers' Society,) p. 10.



It was on this very point that the Minimum Rate Scheme was to founder.

The evidence amassed by the Minimum Rate Committee had been collected from 51 representative firms, possibly too small a sample upon which to base any reliable conclusions, and this revealed the fact that an average advance of about 10 per cent. was required all over the trade to bring up the wages to at least 6d. per hour and the bonus. (1) The advances required in the different sections of the trade were estimated to be as follows:

Chandelier and Electric Fittings Dept.,	10	per	cent.
Common Gasfittings, Department,	5	"	"
Plumbers' Brassfoundry and Steam Fittings Dept.	10	"	"
Cabinet Department,	20	"	"
Fender and Fire-brass Department,	10	"	"
Bedstead Mount and Fender Support Dept.,	15	"	"
Coppersmiths,	10	"	"
Chasers,	10	"	"
Polishers,	7½	"	"
Dippers and Burnishers,	10	"	"
Stampers and Spinners,	10	"	"

These did not include Casters, for whom another Price-List had been suggested, with advances in piece-prices which were calculated to yield the desired minimum rate.

On this occasion the needs of the workmen were

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(1) The Minimum Rate Report dated Oct. 31, 1899.  
Brassworkers' Society, p.10.

something more than an ordinary <sup>claim for</sup> advance of bonus. A new principle was at stake, and the workmen intended to bid for it in all earnestness. At the meeting of brassworkers at which the Scheme was adopted, we see very obvious signs of this attitude. We need only quote the words of W. J. Davis on that occasion: "We ask for a Minimum Rate of Wage. The employers may say they cannot afford to pay it. They will try to convince you that it is against your own interest. That to adopt it will mean the introduction of a dead level where ingenuity and enterprise are not recognised, but all men will be treated alike. That is not our proposal, and I fear that in order to prevent the establishment of a Minimum Rate of wages they will offer you a 5 per cent. or 10 per cent. advance on your present earnings, and this, in my opinion, will be the hardest trial for the Association." Will you accept a 10 per cent. advance and renounce the Minimum Rate? (Loud cries of 'No!'). It will also be said that those who already receive more than the Minimum Rate, if it be adopted, must come down to the level. But, gentlemen, the policy of the Association is that there is no coming down at all."<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, with all earnestness, was the full programme adopted by the workmen.

The Scheme consisted of nine claims, and embraced much more than an application for the establishment of a

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(1) Report of Meeting held at Town Hall, Nov. 16th, 1899.

**Minimum Rate.** Other working conditions were to be brought within the scope of this comprehensive piece of collective bargaining, and the full scheme became:-

1. All workmen classified in the grades, whether piece or day workers, to receive minimum rate of 6d. per hour and the bonus.
2. No deductions to be made from wages for any motor, light, materials, or trade appliances.
3. No journeyman to employ more than one man, one young person, and one boy.
4. One boy to four men over 18 years of age to be the proportion of juvenile labour.
5. Price and a quarter, or time and a quarter, to be paid for overtime.
6. Extra for overtime to be paid after the ordinary hours of a day have been made.
7. A week's notice to quite to be given and taken with both pieceworkers and dayworkers.
8. Not more than 54 hours to constitute a week's work.
9. The rules to be signed on behalf of the Employers' and the Workmen's Associations.

The scheme as a whole then included a Minimum Rate, the abolition of deductions, a regulation of the numbers of underhands a subcontractor may employ, a maximum number of hours of labour per week, and payment at a higher rate for hours worked in excess of that recognized time. Furthermore, it catered for a specific understanding as to the period required for "notice to quit". In the twenty years from 18<sup>7</sup>9 it will be seen that a vast change of policy



had taken effect, for in the Arbitration of that year, it had been pointed out with much eloquence that the men's society had made no bid to restrict underhand labour and to obtain a recognized minimum rate of wages. This scheme of 1899 provided for both these and other claims, and was to be submitted to the Conciliation Boards for deliberation.

There was some delay, however, before these proposals were to receive consideration by the Boards, on account of the ambiguity attaching to the rules of the Boards. The interpretation placed upon them by the employers' secretary, after receipt of the nine proposals, was that the Boards were ~~not~~ competent to deal with the matter until such proposals had been placed before the general body of employers. If the employers opposed the scheme, the matter would then be one in dispute between both parties, and could be submitted to the Boards by virtue of the rule<sup>e</sup> which stated that the object of these Boards was the "amicable settlement of all disputes between manufacturers of, and workmen engaged in brassfoundry". Eventually, following much correspondence, on the subject, this quibble over constitutional procedure was quashed through the holding of a meeting of the employers. The outcome of this meeting was that the matter was to be referred to a joint meeting of the three Boards of Conciliation since the scheme affected the interests of all sections of the

brassfoundry trade. The scheme had already received very unfavourable consideration from the three Associations of Employers<sup>(1)</sup>, so that there seemed little chance of any concrete result from a joint meeting of the Boards. At the same time, as the employers had suggested such a joint meeting, two other resolutions had been carried. The first definitely announced the opinion that "the demands of the Brassworkers were impracticable and could not be accepted", whereas the other put forward four counterproposals from the employers. These were :-

- (a) That the present bonus be reduced unless it is universally paid.
- (b) That employers be at liberty to engage non-union men, paying them the bonus if they think fit.
- (c) That there shall be no responsibility on the part of an employer to ascertain whether any of his employees are members of the Nat. Amalg. Soc. of Brassworkers.
- (d) That no interference by the Nat. Amalg. Society of Brassworkers in the internal management by an employer of his factory can be recognised.

There could be no doubt now that a dispute of great magnitude was brewing, and that relations were likely to become strained.

The joint Board met altogether five times, the first meeting taking place in December, 1899, and the fifth in April,

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(1) Employers' Brassfounders' Association; Gas and Electric Light Fittings Masters' Association; and Water, Steam and Beer Fittings Masters' Association.

1900, by which time very little progress towards a settlement had been made. The most controversial points in the men's scheme, about which there seemed little hope of any agreement, were soon laid on one side at the second meeting as matters to be decided by arbitration; these were Clauses No. 1, No. 3, and No. 4. At the third meeting the men came forward with a very substantial modification of their claim for a minimum wage. After the words "minimum rate of 6d. per hour and the bonus" they were prepared to add "provided that such workmen can produce evidence that they have been in the trade for five years." This proposal would seem to have linked up the payment of a minimum wage with the merit and qualification of workmen claiming it. As the principle of a minimum rate was to be the main source of contention, and not the application of that principle, this addendum to the men's demand appears to have been cast aside without due measure of consideration, and it was not included in the claims submitted to the Arbitrator. At the fourth meeting of the joint Board it was decided to go to arbitration under the conditions of the Conciliation Act of 1896, on all the men's points. At the final meeting of the Board, when the employers' counter claims had been discussed, these suffered the same fate, with the exception of the fourth, about interference in management, to which the men agreed. On April 26th, 1900, application was made to the



Board of Trade for the appointment of an arbitrator, and the the Board appointed none other than Sir David Dale, whose wide experience of such industrial relationships was to be considerably amplified by a knowledge of the complexities of organisation and administration to be found in the brass trades of Birmingham and district.

With such a long list of claims and counter claims, the proceedings lasted nine days, and considerable evidence was presented. Although there was much discussion on the principle of a minimum rate, and on the rearrangements which regulation of underhand labour would involve, there appeared very little evidence of a satisfactory character relating to actual earnings. As for the principle itself, it will not be difficult for the reader to imagine the main points of opposition. It seemed quite wrong for the payment of wages to be based on a mere age qualification, without any reference to a merit qualification. The minimum rate was being claimed for the worker of average ability, but no attempt was made to define this type of worker by any reference to a grading of the workmen. One employer preferred to think that a minimum wage should be the least wage which could be obtained by the least skilled workman, and suggested a figure of 25/- or 27/- as suitable for this purpose. Then, there would be ample scope above this for differences in ability to work themselves out in earning capacity. That these individual differences

not only in ability but also in inclination to work, especially among pieceworkers, were closely connected with the questions of earnings could scarcely be disputed, and one very useful piece of evidence amply demonstrated the fact. The earnings of two workmen in each of four occupations for three or four consecutive weeks were given side by side. These workers were pieceworkers, not under a subcontracting system, employed on exactly the same class of work in each case by a firm which entered into a piecework bargain with its employers as individuals and not as members or heads of a "team". The following are the results -

Piecework Earnings.

	<u>Workman</u> <u>No. 1.</u> <small>s. d.</small>	<u>Workman.</u> <u>No. 2.</u> <small>s. d.</small>
<u>Burnishing.</u>		
1st week,	39/6	25/6½
2nd week,	45/8	29/-½
3rd week,	42/6	28/1½
Average per week,	42/7	27/7
<u>Putting together.</u> (chandelier section)		
1st week,	47/9	29/7
2nd week,	46/4	29/7
3rd week,	47/2	39/2
Average per week,	47/1	32/9
<u>Scroll Bracket Work.</u>		
1st week,	44/11	29/6½
2nd week,	43/5	30/11
3rd week,	45/-	27/4
4th week,	43/7	27/5
Average per week,	41/9	28/9½
<u>Turning-over.</u> (lathe-work)		
1st week,	29/-	24/1
2nd week,	34/1	26/-
3rd week,	36/1	26/-
4th week,	39/4	33/-
Average per week,	34/7½	27/6. (1)

It will be seen that, in the first case, one man earned well above the proposed minimum of 32/5, the other did not succeed in earning it in any of the three weeks. In the second case, the one man earned on the average for the three weeks 31 per cent above the proposed minimum while the second earned less than that figure in two out of the three weeks. In the other two cases the tendency is similar. In face of these facts, it could not be urged that piece work prices were inadequate to yield a certain proposed minimum standard, and there must have been hundreds of such cases in the trade as a whole.

Quite apart from the question of skill and individual differences, it would have been a new departure entirely for employers in the trade generally to interfere with the journeymen and to investigate the rate of wages they paid their underhands, for as one employer stated, the journeyman employed his underhand, who was presumably a member of the Union, paid him what he liked, told him to go home when he liked, and paid him whatsoever wages <sup>he</sup> bargained for." (2)

How had the journeyman fared in the matter of this proposed minimum of 32/5 ? How did his earnings compare with those of the members of his team ? What was the attitude of the journeyman class to this proposal to guarantee 32/5 to every one of the underhands

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(2) Arbitration Report, 1900, 6th Day, p. 54.



who had reached his majority ? Such questions as these immediately spring to the mind of the reader. Unfortunately, they do not admit of definitive and conclusive answers. The evidence does not supply a sufficient number of examples to prove that the journeyman was generally in receipt of the minimum or more. Only in one instance out of about a dozen cited, did a journeyman earn less than 32/5, and only in one instance did an underhand earn more than that figure. It would seem that the journeyman received anything from 33/- up to 40/- or 50/- per week, whereas the adult underhand's earnings ranged from 22/- to 28/- per week. If a journeyman were asked why he did not pay his underhands at a higher rate, he would reply that piecework prices did not warrant it. There is no doubt that some journeymen would have been prepared to sacrifice a little for the benefit of those in a less favourable position, but on the whole it may be assumed that they would not have enthused over such a method of guaranteeing the payment of 32/5 to all adult workmen in the trade. The extra responsibility resting upon the shoulders of the journeyman may have been some justification for his greater remuneration, but whether the difference in earnings was proportionate to this added responsibility was a matter open to question when the journeyman himself was solely responsible for rating the underhands.

In connection with the earnings of journeymen, there was bound to be some light thrown upon the alleged unfair practice of "blind" piecework. The Particulars Order had not at that date been applied to the brass trades, and complaints were constantly arising from the journeymen. One is unable to decide from the evidence whether this alteration of piece-rates was a general occurrence in factories; on the whole it would seem that it was occasional. Usually, the prices were known, for standard lines, <sup>as</sup> the prices were common knowledge and tended to remain fixed at a customary figure. In any case, there was generally a work book, sometimes in the possession of the journeyman himself and sometimes kept by the firm. As far as the actual contract was concerned, it was not at all uncommon for unofficial factory committees of journeymen to meet in consultation for the arrangement of a new price, and members of the union often had recourse to ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup> headquarters in some cases when it was a question of pricing a new piece of work. Accusations of "sweating" could hardly be based on the ground of "blind" piece work in the light of these facts.

In making this application for a minimum rate of wages, the men had to prove that the brassworker of 21 years of age was not receiving earnings in proportion to his skill. W. J. Davis pointed to the standard of minimum rates operating in other trades in the district; the toolmaker had his 36/-,

the ironfounder 38/-, the <sup>b</sup>boilermaker 38/-, the skilled engineer 36/-, the compositor 34/6, the stonemason 8½d. per hour. Why should not the brassworker, who was a skilled mechanic, not be assured of even a minimum of 32/5 ? The answer is of course wrapt up in a number of complicating factors. There was the journeyman system which did not exist in the trades enumerated; this meant complete absence of an apprenticeship period. It could be very legitimately asked: had the brassworker gained sufficient knowledge and skill at the age of 21 years to warrant a minimum of 32/5 ? Besides this, it could be asked, was it at all possible to grade the brassworkers ? Engineers could be sorted into patternmakers, turners, fitters, moulders, labourers, and so on. The brassworker seemed to be living in a constant state of transition from the condition of affairs in which he was a "Jack of all trades", to that in which he was a process worker. Should he be punished with low wages if he were prevented from becoming an all-round mechanic by being kept at one process for a long period, thereby contributing to economy in production ? That was the question which W. J. Davis was fond of dangling before the employers. Yet another obstacle to the payment of the minimum from the employers' point of view was the small master. He was always undercutting, and consequently must be working under "sweated" conditions. Were these small masters to be compelled to pay the proposed minimum, and to what extent could the men's organisation control them ? This was not



a sound argument to use, because the employers were going to be drawn into confessing that they purchased articles for the purpose of resale from these small masters. Although these small masters disposed of some of their wares to factors and merchants, there is no doubt that they derived some business from the larger manufacturers. Seven years later during another Arbitration proceeding, when the same matter was again mentioned, we find the following piece of interrogation :

"Q. (W.J. Davis): These small masters that you refer to - are they at all supported by the larger employers ?

A. (Employer): Yes.

Q. Do you, yourself, as a firm, I mean, of course, supply these small masters with orders ?

A. Certainly. They can make stuff cheaper than we can make it because we have to give a higher rate of wages in our factory than these others. In order to exist ourselves, we help them to exist."<sup>(1)</sup>

Another employer also admitted it in these words: "We have been compelled to purchase from competitors who undersell us, and produce at a lower rate of wages."<sup>(2)</sup> This method of doing business, which had such disastrous effects on wages all round, was also exposed in the course of the proceedings with which we are now dealing. The outworkers and the small

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(1) Arbitration Report, 1907. p.

(2) Ibid.

masters always have been an impediment to effective labour organisation, and the brass trades proved no exception.

Those three factors, the journeyman system, lack of an obvious demarcation between grade and grade, and the competition of small masters, supply the answer to the question of why skilled mechanics were working at such low rates of remuneration. The reader may wish to ask how far the adult brassworker fell short of the desired minimum. Information on the point is not abundant, although the writer was able to adapt certain of the evidence to his needs in this direction. Even then, the need was not fully satisfied. Small samples were given for each of the three sections of the trade, from which we may obtain some idea of the proportion of adult brassworkers who did not earn as much as the required minimum rate, and of their average wage. These facts are contained in the table below -

(See next page).

Sample of Earnings of Brassworkers, 1900.

Section of the Trade.	Number of Firms.	Total No. of male hands over 21 yrs.	No. earning 32/5 or more.	No. earning less than 32/5.	Average weekly earnings of those earning less than 32/5.	
					s.	d.
Chandeliers, Gasfittings, etc.	23	623	196	427	27.	7½
Plumbers' Brass-foundry.	8	178	60	118	28.	5
Cabinet do.	7	200	32	168	25.	8.
Military ornaments.	1	19	9	10	29.	0¼
	39	1020	297	723	27.	3½

From this sample it is seen that about 70 per cent of the adult males employed in 39 firms from which the material is gleaned, were earning less than the proposed minimum of 32/5, and their average weekly earnings amounted to 27/3½. This gives no indication whatsoever of the average earnings of the remaining 30 per cent. Furthermore, we may question whether this sample is sufficiently representative, drawn as it is from about 40 establishments. Besides, there is no means of discovering what proportion of the adult hands within the scope of the Arbitration is covered by the 1020 workmen included above. It was estimated by W. J. Davis that there were 5079 adult male brassworkers in Birmingham and Wolverhampton who were



employed in the trades concerned in the proceedings. So if we accept that estimate, then the sample above represents about 20 per cent. of the total class, and if we knew how the 34 firms had been selected, then we might also have accepted the figure of 70 per cent as a fair representation of the extent to which the average wage of  $27/3\frac{1}{2}$  would have to be advanced to provide the minimum rate desired by the workers. Of course, it must be borne in mind that the above results give no indication of the variability of earnings within the groups contained in the sample. However, it seems fairly safe to say that, whether justified on the grounds of skill or not, an award of 6d. per hour and bonus as a minimum rate would have necessitated considerable advances in wages. Conditions of trade were not brisk at the time of this agitation, neither was business particularly slack. Thus the figure of  $32/5$  was contested, not so much on the ground that the employers could not afford to add to their labour charges with increased wages, as on the score that the workman of 21 years of age should not be guaranteed such a high rate of wages if there was no guarantee at the same time that he was worth that amount to the employer.

Turning to the other aspect from which wages negotiations are viewed, one finds again in these proceedings as in those of 1879, a reference to the meagre subsistence

afforded by a wage of 27/6, this on the basis of the sample analysed being approximately the average earnings of workmen not in receipt of the minimum rate. W. J. Davis submitted that a weekly wage of 27/6 would be laid out in the following manner, where the family consisted of husband, wife and three children -

<u>Items of Expenditure.</u>	<u>Amount spent.</u>		<u>Per cent.</u>
	s.	d.	
Food.	12.	10.	46.7.
Rent.	5.	0.	18.2.
Clothing.	4.	0.	14.5.
Fuel and Light,	2.	0.	7.3.
Other items,	3.	8½	13.3.
<hr/>			
All items,	27.	6½	100.0.
<hr/>			

The figure given for Rent was based on a Report by the Health Committee to the City Council and on information gathered from other quarters. "Other Items" include 2/- for short time, but nothing for household renewals and repairs. "Not a tea-cup must be broken, nor a broom or a mop wear out." (1) One learns no more than this from the proceedings about the subsistence point of view.

As for the second claim for abolition of the deduction for mill power, light, materials, etc., the pros and cons were left with little choice between them. The trades were "one of the last trades that remained on the

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(1) W.J. Davis in evidence, First Day.

fossilled footing of payment for appliances" and "even for the very light"<sup>(1)(2)</sup> by which the men worked. Such deductions were neither just nor defensible", and were against the spirit of the Truck Acts. They came almost within the letter of the law, nevertheless, since it could not be denied that the men had concurred in the making of them. Often such charges meant all the difference between the earning of the proposed minimum and a lower rate. The only objection that could be raised to the demand for abolition was that it was going to be extremely difficult to remove the deduction by making allowances for it in reduced piece prices. How was it going to be possible to distribute say a charge of 1/- over a very large number of piece prices without inconvenience and dispute ? Of course, it was not an impossibility. One firm which had made deductions for machinery and light for thirty years had abolished the charges in 1897, and with very little trouble had revised piece prices to compensate for them.<sup>(2)</sup> It is a thing which is continually being done in all establishments where newer methods of production provide greater facilities for the pieceworker. An alternative would have been to remove the charges with no rearrangement of piece prices, but consent to this would not have been obtained,

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(1)(2) W. J. Davis, at Meeting, November 16th, 1899.

(2)(2) Arbitration Proceedings, 1900, Eighth day.



as it would have placed at a disadvantage those manufacturers who had been in business for many years and who had at some time or other substituted new for old appliances as compared with the more recently established firms which had started with the latest equipment and plant, and which had arranged their piecework prices accordingly, with no need for deductions.

The proposal to regulate the number of underhands employed aroused more controversial issues. That no journeyman should employ more than one man, one young person, and one boy seemed to be "a moderate proposal, and one which should be generally approved by the manufacturers as a gentle effort to break a custom which they and the workmen knew to be wrong."<sup>(1)</sup> Theoretically it seemed to be the thin end of the wedge, as a means of interfering in the organisation of the workshop with the object of improving the lot of the lower paid underhand. In practice it would have been no easy matter to effect a sudden change. There was no general clamour for complete abandonment of the subcontracting system; employers had no such desire to take more interest in the underhands. It would have brought about divided responsibility if the management were called upon to impose some measure of supervision over the work of the underhands. Employers were certainly not going to break away from this traditional

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(1) W. J. Davis, Meeting, November 16th, 1899.

method of payment by result, because under a system of daywork it would have been decidedly more difficult to ~~gauge~~<sup>as</sup> the labour cost in the manufacture of any particular article. One wonders why, in face of such currents of opposition, a claim was not inserted to ensure that the underhands were paid direct from the office, and not by the journeyman, even though they were rated by the journeyman. This would have at least transferred into the hands of the management some degree of responsibility for the workmen on the employer's premises. Such a suggestion, although a highly desirable reform and a step in the right direction, would not have received the support of the journeymen in the men's Society, although there is no doubt that the more enlightened among them would willingly have submitted to this alteration.

This claim for regulation of the number of underhands to three per journeyman was more likely to appeal to the rank and file of workers, since it would necessitate the creation of more posts for journeymen. There are no means of discovering what was the average number of underhands a journeyman employed in 1900, although the tendency had been in the direction of a diminution in the number. From the cases quoted in evidence, it appears that the typical number was anything from four or five to ten per journeyman. If, by agreement, this figure were suddenly to be reduced

to a minimum of three, what was going to happen to the surplus underhand labour ? Either, the employer, or rather the journeyman, must dispense with the services of some of the underhands, or a large number of underhands must be promoted to the position of journeyman. The former solution was as absurd as it was logical, for it was rather an incongruity to withdraw a labour supply which was necessary to a given volume of production, merely to satisfy the requirements of a hypothetical principle. Besides, the journeymen themselves admitted that they would not have been able to carry out the work of their shop if they were deprived of the services of some of their underhands. The truth was that the number of men employed under a sub-contractor depended entirely on the nature of the work to be performed and on the size of the order to be completed. As no suggestion was being made to eliminate the journeyman's use of his own discretion in the matter of taking on of new labour, then it seemed foolish to advocate the restriction in numbers of underhands to three per journeyman. To increase the number of journeymen, appeared to be a good thing. It was good for the underhand, because in many cases this type of worker regarded the journeyman as a sort of task-master who did little work himself while his "team" laboured for his gain. Such a project would give encouragement to the younger men, it would promote skill and improve the quality of production,



Furthermore, it was argued, it would provide readier employment ! These all seemed sound reasons why claim No. 3 should be conceded.

But would it have been such a simple transformation ? It should be considered that there was no such department as a tool room as one finds in a modern engineering works; a journeyman usually provided his own tools, and there was no interchange of tools and machinery between one journeyman and another, tools were not the common property of the shop. It may not have been the most economical use of equipment, but traditional methods are not easily overcome, and one can readily imagine how perplexing it would have been to make the necessary readjustment in the proportion of labour force to equipment. Two examples will provide sufficient illustration. In one large establishment engaged in the manufacture of cabinet brassfoundry, there were, exclusive of Casters and dayworkers, 46 journeymen and 242 underhands. The 242 underhands were arranged in the following age groups, corresponding to the claim made by the men:

<u>Age.</u>	<u>Number.</u>
Over 21 years.	157.
18 - 21 "	30.
Under 18 "	55.

The claim was, one man, one young person, and one boy per journeyman. What was the employer to do with the

surplus underhands in this case where there were only 46 journeymen ? There was hardly room for such a big increase in the number of journeymen in this case to conform with the demand. The same difficulties would be encountered in the second case, where all three branches of manufacture were carried on. On daywork there were 11 journeymen, employing 108 underhands. The maximum number of underhands, if no promotions to journeymen were possible, according to claim No. 3 would be 33. On piecework, there were 26 journeymen and 157 underhands. Was rearrangement to be such a simple concern ? In repeating the question, the writer hopes that the answer has been made clear. Closely allied to this claim was the next proposal that some check on the employment of juveniles should be instituted. This appears to be a trifle inconsistent with the demands made in the preceding claim, for under that there would be one boy to three men over 18 years of age, whereas claim No. 4 meant one boy to four men. There may have been some justification for such a regulation, for the brass trades were open trades, and the journeyman system probably resulted in the indiscriminate employment of juveniles who found few opportunities for their advancement. But was this a problem confined to the brass trades, after all ? Besides, the tendency was for a narrowing of the opportunities for juvenile labour, where machines were supplanting boys in the process of edging the rough castings.

The remaining claims in this programme of nine points were not of such a nature as to present serious conflict of opinion. Regarding claims (5) and (6), there was no real objection to the principle involved, although the method of its application was likely to upset the chances of its success. The claim was for overtime payment at the rate of price-and-a-quarter or time-and-a-quarter after the ordinary hours of a day have been made. Dispute was apt to arise where the pieceworker was not subjected to any factory discipline. There were many establishments in which the pieceworker was fairly free to work when and how he pleased. The traditional habit of "playing away" on Monday still lingered among some workmen, and it was not going to be so easy to define the "ordinary hours of a day" for the purposes of assessing overtime remuneration. It should be pointed out that there was no desire to encourage overtime on the part of the men's leaders; they would have preferred the absorption of the 225 members who were at that time on their unemployment registers.

During the proceedings, the nine points in the men's demands received far greater attention than did the three counterclaims of the employers. There was, as usual, discussion on the extent of control the union exercised over smaller establishments which employed non-union labour, and which evaded the payment of the bonus. The arbitrator's



award itself was only going to be binding on the parties to it, and the employers' organisations included but about 150 firms in the trade. The men themselves were not fully organised, and the employers were protesting against any stipulation, such as was made in 1896, which was likely to increase the strength of the trade union. Hence the employers wished for a reduction in the bonus of 20 per cent. if it were not universally paid; they wished to be free to engage non-union men and to pay them the bonus only if they thought fit. Their third claim was that they should not be responsible for ascertaining whether any of their employees were members of the trade union; this duty was imposed upon them if they were to pay the extra bonus conceded in 1896 to union men only. There were, of course, very large numbers of workmen engaged in the manufacture and use of brass who were not subject to the arbitrator's award; for example, there were those employed as brassworkers in bedstead factories. In addition to making the brass parts of a metallic bedstead, firms often took up the manufacture of other articles in brass, and such brassworkers did not always come within the notice of the union. In any case, these negotiations did not affect the strip-casters who produced ingot brass, rollers of sheets and bars and tube drawers. However, W. J. Davis was frank enough with the employers, and was able to state that, although they only accounted for about 150 firms, about 80 per cent. of the brassworkers over 21 years of age were employed

by those firms represented at the arbitration. At the close of the proceedings, he presented figures to support this contention, these being based on his own investigations in that direction.

Brassworkers over 21 years of age  
Employed by Associated and Non-Associated Firms in  
Birmingham, 1900.

<u>Branch of Trade.</u>	<u>Numbers employed by Associated Firms.</u>	<u>Numbers employed by Non-Associated Firms.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Cabinet Brass-foundry.	1646	275	1921
Plumbers' do.	568	198	766
Chandeliers etc.	1588	460	2048
<hr/> Totals	<hr/> 3802	<hr/> 933	<hr/> 4735 <hr/>

Add to these the figures given for Wolverhampton, which were for associated firms 197 and non-associated firms 147, and we arrive at figures for the District:

Numbers employed in Associated Firms,	3999
" " " Non-Associated Firms,	<u>1080</u>
Total	<u>5079.</u> (1)

Thus, the trade was fairly well represented at the Arbitration,

(1) Arbitration Report, 1900, Ninth Day, p. 36 et seq.

and whatever the arbitrator's decisions might be, there was no gainsaying that he was acquainted with the extent to which his award might legally be observed.

It was later in the year when the award was proclaimed. Considering the wide scope of the claims, one may recognise the award as a very fine piece of compromise. Neither side could claim a victory, as will be seen from the award.

### Claims of Trade Union.

### Award.

- |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Minimum rate<br>6d. per hour plus bonus (20%)<br>= 32/5 per week.<br>Workmen over 21 years of age. | 4½d. per hour and bonus<br>(20%)                                                                                                                                                             |
| 2. No deductions.                                                                                     | Allowed, subject to condition that where such charges were made at the time, the prevailing piecework prices to be reduced to an extent equivalent to the deductions which cease to be made. |
| 3. Regulation of number of underhands.                                                                | Disallowed.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 4. Regulation of juvenile employment.                                                                 | Disallowed.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 5. Overtime at price and a quarter or time and a quarter.                                             | Allowed.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 6. Payment for overtime after ordinary hours of the <u>day</u> had been worked.                       | Allowed after full 54 hours had been paid.                                                                                                                                                   |
| 7. A week's notice on either side.                                                                    | Allowed.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 8. Hours of labour per week.<br>Maximum 54 hours.                                                     | Allowed.                                                                                                                                                                                     |



9. Rules to be signed by both Associations.

No award. Supplementary award to be made if fuller information was forthcoming

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Counter claims of Employers.

- |                                                                                                         |                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Reduction of Bonus, lacking universality of payment.                                                 | Disallowed.                                    |
| 2. That employers be free to engage non-union men paying them the full bonus <u>if they think fit</u> . | Allowed, except the words "if they think fit". |
| 3. No responsibility on part of employers to ascertain whether a man was a union man or not.            | Allowed.                                       |
- 

The men were frankly disappointed; two of the three main planks had been torn away altogether, and the third was very much curtailed. Their crumbs of comfort provided them with a minimum rate of a kind, for which the very bottom dog could be thankful, but such a low figure of 24/3½ per week was a disgrace in the eyes of the proud brass-worker and the award on claim no. 1 <sup>w</sup>ould necessitate few advances in wages. A principle, however, had been established. Deductions from wages for motor power and light were to cease, but their removal would bring no advantage to the earnings of the men, since piecework prices were to be reduced. Payment for overtime at rate and a quarter was to be the rule, but only after the full 54 hours had been made in a week. That the maximum working week should be one of 54 hours was now

to become a specific agreement in place of an accepted practice. Hours of labour were already 54 per week in the district. It was a great blow to the union when it became known that the stipulation as to the payment of the full 20 per cent. bonus which had been obtained in 1896, was now to be cast aside. It "took away one of the best ideas that ever existed between manufacturers and workmen, that of paying the bonus only to members of the Association who won it."<sup>(1)</sup> The brassworkers' second experience of arbitration, then, was not too pleasant, but they remained loyal to the award, which was binding on both sides for at least twelve months.

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(1) W. J. Davis at meeting of Executive. Dec. 13th, 1900.

(ii) The Arbitration of 1907.

No advance in wages had resulted from the award of Sir David Dale and the brassworkers still kept in mind their aim of 6d. per hour plus bonus. They awaited a favourable opportunity of pressing again for this figure. Unfortunately, their demands had to be deferred for about six years, for trade was slack throughout 1903, 1904 and 1905. Unemployment among brassworkers increased and unemployment of a more permanent nature took the place of casual unemployment, largely as a result of the introduction of labour-saving machinery and the increasing employment of females at unskilled operations. Trade union membership suffered in the Birmingham district during these years (1) and the leaders must have despaired of ever getting an opportunity of putting forward their demands, for they knew that unless they could present an united front with all brassworkers behind them, whatever they claimed was bound to evade their grasp. Thus, throughout 1905 and 1906, the energy of the men's leaders was devoted to strengthening their organisation. In 1906, there were signs of a revival in trade activity and tentative efforts for another advance in wages were made through the Conciliation Boards. It was then ten years since any advance had been obtained and there is little doubt that during the first four or five years of the new century, reductions in piece prices had been effected, where men were already earning more than the minimum of 24s. 3½d. But

(1)

Membership of Birmingham Branch.

1899 - 7528	1901 - 4856	1903 - 4191
1900 - 6116	1902 - 4477	1904 - 4006



these efforts for a further advance brought no reward because the employers were of the opinion that trade had not sufficiently recovered to warrant any increase.

Before another year had elapsed, the men's patience had been exhausted. On July 8th, 1907, they brought their claims to the notice of the Joint Conciliation Board. These were

1. That 6d. per hour and the bonus (20 per cent at that time) be paid to members of the Society over 21 years of age.
2. That the bonus of 20 per cent paid to pieceworkers be increased to 30 per cent.
3. That the bonus of 20 per cent paid to Dayworkers be increased to 30 per cent.
4. That the advance be paid to members of the Amalgamated Society of Brassworkers only.

Relations were far from being harmonious at the meetings of the Board and employers, as might have been expected, counter-claimed "that in the event of the workmen's demands going to Arbitration, the masters claim a reduction of 10 per cent on the present prices paid to pieceworkers and in the wages of dayworkers, except in the case of those receiving the minimum rate only". Conciliation failed to yield a settlement, so for the second time within seven years, application was made to the Board of Trade for the appointment of an Arbitrator. On this occasion Sir J. T. Woodhouse was appointed to determine the issue.

After hearing evidence on both sides for three days, the Arbitrator was unable to give the verdict either way. Neither did he attempt a compromise. Certainly no very blatant case of sweating was brought before his notice. In

practically every instance in which the actual amount of earnings were stated, there was no great gap between the figures given and the minimum rate desired. There was a chandelier finisher who had earned 35s. a week on day work and was received about 34s. a week on piecework at that time. There was an underhand dayworker, who could file work, turn it, screw it, braze it, finish it up and put it together, engaged on ship's work, railway work and tram work, whose earnings were 33s.6d. a week. Another case was that of a polisher who worked under the supervision of a charge-hand on daywork at the rate of 33s. a week. A journeyman caster gave his average earnings as 38s. per week and those of his son, who assisted him, as 36s. or 37s. a week. These amounts were lower than if he had given the weekly average for a period of five years. A journeyman from Wolverhampton received on an average about 43s. per week and the wages of his three underhands were 37s., 35s. and 30s. This was work on gas fittings and water fittings. In another branch of manufacture, namely pneumatic work like pumps and garden syringes, a workman was in receipt of 37s. 6d. per week. Two individual cases from the cabinet section also showed that earnings did not fall below the proposed minimum rate. These were both journeymen employing one underhand; one earned about 40s. a week and the other 35s. The underhand in the second case was 25 years of age and was rated at 32s. 6d. or 33s. The writer does not wish to suggest that these few individual instances prove conclusively that earnings were not unduly

depressed. On the other hand, one may think that the object of putting forward such cases was to demonstrate that a minimum rate of 32s. 5d. would impose no great hardship on manufacturers, since they already paid at such a rate.

The evidence does give us a little more than a few isolated examples. The earnings for different classes of workmen at one establishment were given. (1) These were grouped as below :-

Chasers and Repairers.

2 at 40s.			
1 at 34s.			
1 at 30s.	Average		3 out of 6 earned
1 at 28s.	33s.2d.		more than the required
1 at 27s.			minimum rate.
<u>6</u>			

Makers-up

1 at 50s.			
1 at 42s.	Average		All earned more
1 at 40s.	40s.5d.		than the required
2 at 35s.			minimum rate.
<u>5</u>			

Lathe Hands.

3 at 30s.			
2 at 28s.	Average		All earned less than the
1 at 27s.	28s.10d.		required minimum rate.
<u>6</u>			The degree of skill
			involved was probably
			responsible for that
			condition.

Polishers (Journeyman excluded)

3 at 33s.			
1 at 32s.			
1 at 31s.9d.	Average		5 out of 8 earned less
1 at 30s.	31s.1½d.		than the required minimum
1 at 28s.3d.			rate, although one earned
1 at 28s.			approximately that figure.
<u>8</u>			

Burnishers.

The highest earnings were 42s. and the lowest (being the only one below 30s.) earnings were 27s.

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(1) Taken from evidence in Arbitration Report 1906.



A review of these figures shows that the workmen did not become graded into Makers-up, Lathe Hands, Polishers and so on but were graded according to earning capacity and skill within each occupational class. There was something of material importance lacking from a proposal which intended to guarantee the payment of one figure all round as a minimum rate. The average earnings included in the above categories compared fairly favourable with the minimum rate of 6d. per hour plus bonus which was being claimed. Actually, it is not at all clear whether the new minimum envisaged a bonus of 30 per cent or merely retained the existing figure of 20 per cent. Another point to which attention was drawn during the proceedings was that the earnings of workmen depended on whether they were engaged on "common" work or on work of a higher class. A manufacturer quoted earnings in his own works in support of this. In the manufacture of "common" types of work, the average weekly earnings in 1907 came to 28s. per week of 51 hours, whereas the average weekly earnings of 59 men engaged on higher class work amounted at the same time to 44s. 9d. It was certainly not an easy question for an arbitrator to decide whether all workmen over 21 years of age were to be guaranteed 32s. 5d. per week. It had been suggested to him that the imposition of such a high minimum rate would be detrimental to the manufacture of the "common" lines of brasswork.

What was likely to be the fate of claims (2) and (3) for an advance in bonus? Cost of living and conditions

of trade were certain to figure prominently in defence of or opposition to such demands. One is given the impression that workmen had experienced a rise in the cost of maintaining their normal standard of living; house rents had increased and complaints were made that coal was also more expensive. There was no index number of any kind at that time other than for wholesale prices to bear out these assertions. W. J. Davis again resorted to his favourite device of analysing the weekly household budget of expenditure, this time for an income of 32s. 1d. per week. The proportions spent on the different categories were estimated to be :-

Items of Expenditure.	Amount.	Per cent.
Food.	15s.	46.8
Rent.	5s.	15.6
Clothing.	4s.	12.5
Fuel and Light.	2s. 6d.	7.7.
Other Items.	5s. 7d.	17.4.
All Items.	32s. 1d.	100.

The only appreciable difference between this estimate and that submitted in 1900 is that a smaller proportion was now assigned to Rent because the income was taken as near the proposed minimum and not at the average figure for those earning less than the proposed minimum, as was done in 1900. No absolute increase in weekly <sup>rent</sup> occurred, according to these estimates, between 1900 and 1907. "Other Items" assumed wider proportions in the later budget, newspapers and household hardwares being added. An amount of 2s. was again inserted as a contingent against short time but the budget left no room for luxuries or recreative activity. Such evidence as this, however, although it may have sufficed to illustrate the meagre sort

living that even a weekly sum of 32s.5d. provided, was hardly indicative of any great hardship to be removed by the award of a minimum rate of 32s. 5d.

Besides, one has to turn to the other side of the picture. If we only find vague statements in relation to cost of living, we are no better served with proofs as to the fitness of time for an advance in wages relative to conditions of trade in 1907. True, we find for one large establishment figures for the production of brass, exclusive of ingot brass for rolling, for the years 1901 to 1906. These were :-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons</u>
1901	198
1902	211
1903	219
1904	186
1905	166
1906	169

showing that the year 1903 was the best year since the opening of the century. The wages bill for this particular firm revealed a like tendency. The total wages bill was not stated but if we assume that £X was the figure for 1903, which year had the highest figure, the figures for the other years, relative to 1903, were :-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount of <sup>Wages.</sup> <del>turnover</del></u>
1901	£X = £1975.
1902	£X = £752
1903	£X =
1904	£X = £840
1905	£X = £2346
1906	£X = £4084

In addition it was pointed out that the decrease in turnover corresponded with the decline in amounts of wages paid. There was prima facie evidence of a kind, not by any means substantial



to show that conditions of trade were not amenable to any further advance in the percentage bonus. Trade had fallen away after the effects of the South African War had worn off and greater difficulties were experienced in placing goods in foreign markets in competition with domestic production in these centres.

As for the fourth claim, the result was a foregone conclusion. Arguments proceeded on identical lines with those of the previous arbitration. It was averred that the men's society was not strong enough to control all the labour in the trade. Sooner than walk the streets, many workmen would accept employment in smaller firms at 25s., 26s. or 27s. a week and the Union could not enforce payment of 32s.5<sup>d</sup> to which the leaders of the men retorted that in 1889 they had given a written guarantee that universal payment of the bonus would be secured by a certain date, the penalty for non-achievement of this being removal of the extra bonus and it had not been necessary to adopt this latter course. The employers pointed out that the award with regard to payment for overtime had not been observed after 1900 for some time until one employer, who had been more conscientious than the rest, drew attention to the default. There was no reason why an employer should discriminate between a union and a non-union man. He was only concerned with the work performed by any man and with the workman's conduct while at his work. The employer's advocate questioned whether the arbitrator had the power to decide on the principle raised

in the fourth claim. He could only decide issues between the parties to the arbitration, whereas if he granted the privilege demanded by the men, he would be giving a ruling which affected workers not covered by those negotiations. It was a fine legal point. Again, ~~an~~ reference was made to the number of employers who were members of the three employers' organisations represented at the arbitration; only about 110 were represented out of about 500 firms in the district. To these contentions, W. J. Davis again submitted that the organised employers counted for about 80 per cent of the workmen concerned and he denounced rather vigorously the business connections which had arisen between the smaller firms and the larger manufacturers. He said:-

"There used to be a great number of out workers in Birmingham but that was not our fault. You larger employers made them yourselves; they worked for you, they did not work for the public. These little places made sash-fasteners, hinges and all sorts of little things for you, for they worked low and you got the advantage by employing them over the men you employ by necessity; and yet you bring it as an argument against us in this Court. It is not fair. You have been punished, of course, because some of these men, these littlemen, have gradually got to know where you got your orders from and became competitors of yours, and when they became competitors of yours, then you complained. But you have set them up in business yourself and you want us to be responsible for it." (1)

As in 1900, the two parties were unable to get to grips with the real problems. Private enterprise demanded that as many firms as wished could seek to eke out an existence, freedom from restraint and from coercion demanded that non-union labour could imprint its baneful influence on the

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(1) Arbitration Proceedings 1907. Summing up. p of Report.

standards of the trade as a whole and the journeyman system demanded how the remuneration of a large proportion of the workmen should be determined. In fact, there were journeymen who did not welcome the demand for a minimum rate of 32s.5d. for all workmen over 21 years of age, although in their selfishness they were quite prepared to support the claim for a further advance in the percentage bonus on earnings. There was no doubt that extension of process work as a result of increasing sub-division of labour was also proving an obstacle to the attainment of the ideal minimum rate. If the men had not succeeded in establishing a good cause for their four demands, it was equally true that the masters had failed to justify their counterclaim for a reduction of bonus. The proceedings had in many directions been a replica of those in 1900 but while some small advantages accrued in that year, Sir James Woodhouse was able to sum up his award in one word "Nil". The minimum rate was left at the low figure of 24s. 3½d. per week for males over 21 years of age and the percentage bonus remained at 20 per cent. The non-unionist was left also on exactly the same footing as the unionist. This state of affairs was to obtain for at least twelve months under the conditions of the arbitration.

This time the brassworkers' disappointment was keener than ever but on the advice of their chief, they accepted the decision of the arbitrator. One thing was plain, however,; they were going to steer clear of arbitration in future as a method of improving their standards.



Arbitration for them was "killed". In 1879, their bonus had suffered reduction from 15 per cent to 10 per cent; in 1900 they had been compelled to accept a disgustingly low figure for their minimum rate; and now in 1907, their hopes had been completely shattered, - all the result of arbitration !

In 1872, they had gained their first success with the 15 per cent bonus; in 1889, they had succeeded in restoring the bonus to its original level; and in 1896, they had scored again with an advance to a 20 per cent bonus - all the result of direct negotiation and pressure ! Not even had the aid of conciliation machinery been invoked in these successes. Their only gains from conciliation had been the sash-fasteners' price list and the casters' price list. So the brassworkers, in 1907, proclaimed against arbitration as a future instrument in carrying out their policy and went so far as to sever all connection with the Conciliation Boards. The terms of the Conciliation Act of 1896 no longer appealed to them.

CHAPTER 6.

Sweating Crusade and the Grading Scheme.

1908-1913.

CHAPTER 6.SWEATING CRUSADE AND THE GRADING SCHEME.1909 - 1913.

Relations between employers and men were not particularly amicable after the overthrow of conciliation machinery. No further movement for any advance in wages was promulgated until late in 1909. Although it had not been proved that earnings were generally unduly low, the men's leaders were convinced that conditions of "sweating" were rife in many branches of the trade. So they next turned their attention to the men at the bottom. If conditions of wages could be improved for these lowly placed workers, there was some chance of strengthening their organisation. Public sentiment at that time was in their favour and trade had become more active. Thus, while there was a public outcry against "sweated" labour and respectable citizens were being shocked by the dreadful tales of poverty and oppression among working class families, the brassworkers launched their own Sweating Crusade. Their line of action on this occasion was not an endeavour to secure an all round minimum rate of 32/-, but an appeal for an advance of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d per hour to all adult males who were at that time earning less than 28/-. In effect, this would have raised the recognised minimum rate from  $24/3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $26/6\frac{1}{2}$ , but the increase now claimed was not to be confined to those at the minimum rate.

Six meetings were held in different parts of the city in order to attract public sympathy towards the movement.



Strong feeling was evinced against actual cases of underpaid labour which were exposed, and against the employment of women in the polishing shops. This latter question was an old sore and one over which W. J. Davis had crossed swords with women trade unionists at meetings of the Trades Union <sup>Congress</sup> ~~Council~~. Not only was polishing laborious and unsuited to females, but employment of females had the effect of lowering the wages of male polishers. As has been indicated already, these low wages of the younger brassworkers were partly attributed to the introduction of machinery and the consequent extension of division of labour. On this point W. J. Davis expressed himself in the following language:

"I am of the opinion that a man who turns the handle on a machine, or a man who pulls the lever in the interests of the community, and who cheapens production, ought to be regarded as a man, and paid properly; machinery should be a blessing, and not a curse". (1)

References were made to the efforts of the legislature to grapple with the evil of "sweating", but the brassworkers were not anxious that such a stigma should really fall upon their trade; they did not wish to suffer the indignity of being scheduled under the newly enacted Trade Board <sup>ion</sup> ~~legislature~~ (2). At the second meeting of the crusade, a challenge was thrown out to those public spirited persons who were busying themselves with denouncing "sweating" in a

(1) First meeting in Bristol Hall, Bristol Street, October 19, 1909.

(2) Fourth meeting in Lingard Street Schools, November 4th, 1909.

general sort of way, without coming into the open to take part in any specific campaign for its eradication. This was in reality a direct challenge to the Bishop of Birmingham to give practical proof of his sincerity by lending support to the brassworkers' crusade.

While the Bishop did not actually appear on a public platform on behalf of the movement, he expressed a willingness to join in the campaign provided that actual instances of "sweating" were brought to his notice. ~~///~~ On another platform, the Bishop is reported to have said: "When I read the speech of Mr. Davis, I felt I was not nearly so sacerdotal as was Mr. Davis. I am quite willing to dress myself in all the most effective features of episcopal attire, to arm myself with bell, book and candle, in order to exercise "sweating" at any point indicated by Mr. Davis, but I am afraid that, after that ceremony, the evil would still exist" (1). The Bishop did come forward, and served as a mediator between both sides. He pleaded against a strike, as this seemed imminent at that stage, because employers showed no inclination to yield to the men's demands. His mediation resulted in the resuscitation of the Conciliation Board, so that a better spirit may be engendered for the point in dispute to be thrashed out in a proper manner.

The employers had already met and resolved:

"That (this meeting) while in sympathy on account of the general rise in the cost of living with the demand of the men for an increase of wages regrets that as the Brassworkers' Society does not control

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(1) W. A. Dalley, Op.cit. p.268.

a large number of the men who are the worst paid, it is unable to grant the demand until Mr. Davis is able to control a larger proportion of the men, and also enforce the present minimum".

The justness of the claim was not refuted, and all the blame was thrust upon the shoulder of the union for any "sweating" that might exist. Later the employers saw a way out of the difficulty by realising that there was an Act on the Statute Book, by virtue of which "sweating" employers could be compelled by law to pay any minimum rate of wages agreed upon. After meeting in committee, the employers forwarded the following proposal to the union:

"The Committee recommended the Association (i.e., Brass Masters' Association) to seek the co-operation of the Brassworkers' Society to bring about the scheduling under the Act (i.e., Trade Boards Act, 1909) of the Brass Trades throughout the country, in order to secure what they admit does not exist today - the payment of a proper wage by all manufacturers to all work-people. The Committee agrees with the representatives of the workpeople that "sweating" must exist, and they form this conclusion from the fact that many brass goods are being sold at such prices that they could not be produced unless too low a wage was being paid for production. They believe it is impossible to bring about an alteration of the present condition unless legislative aid is invoked".

Any feelings of bitterness had then been largely removed by the timely intervention of the Bishop, and the better class of employers were now expressing a willingness to cooperate in crushing the unfair competition from smaller firms.

Such was the state of affairs when both sides met again as a Conciliation Board. For the third time (1)

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(1) The fourth if one includes the arrangement made in the Chandelier and Gasfittings trade in 1874.



permanent conciliation machinery was to be set in motion. There was to be one Board instead of three, since by this time there was considerably more cohesion between employers in the different sections of the trade. As usual, there was to be equality of representatives, this of course, being a standing principle in all of such bodies. The most vital difference, however, was in the clause relating to the ultimate recourse to Arbitration. The men were suspicious of arbitration, and resentful of the treatment that had been meted out to them by single arbitrators. Thus, they would only consent, in the new regulations, to collective arbitration. Unsettled matters in dispute were to be submitted to a small board of arbitrators consisting of two members appointed by the employers, two by the workmen and an independent Chairman appointed by the Board of Trade.

The Board met on March 7th, 1910, when it was resolved on the proposition of a workmen's representative (the general body of workmen having agreed at a general meeting):

"That the proposal of the Employers' Association to invite the workmen to co-operate in requesting the Board of Trade to schedule the Brass Trades of the country under the Trade Boards Act of 1909 be and is hereby approved". (1)

This meant that if the Board of Trade were satisfied, after preliminary investigation that the Act might possibly be invoked, a Public Enquiry would be instituted to reveal conditions in the trade. Preliminary investigations were

made in April 1910, and as a result of these, the Board of Trade was so far from being convinced that a Trade Board was necessary that it did not grant even a Public Enquiry (1). This avenue having yielded no outlet, steps were retraced, and the men reverted to their original claim for an advance of 1d per hour to all male brassworkers over 21 years of age who were earning less than 28/- per week. The demand was met with the same stern refusal as before, voting was equal on either side at the meeting of the Conciliation Board, and another arbitration seemed inevitable.

At this juncture, an employer came forward with a solution. The reader will have gathered from the above account of negotiations that there was a big range of skill from top to bottom in the brass trades, and that corresponding to this there was also a big range of earning capacity. While one worker was obviously worth at least a certain figure, another's ability did not entitle him to such a high figure. Yet another man may be lower down the scale. Why not devise a scheme by which a workman, if he had a certain experience behind him and could perform specific operations, should be entitled to a certain minimum rate of wages, with other

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(1) The writer endeavoured to discover <sup>upon</sup> what evidence no action was taken by the Board of Trade. It appears that no very elaborate investigation was made, and no papers or reports dealing with the matter have been kept, either at the Labour Department of the Board of Trade (now the Ministry of Labour) or at the Office of Trade Boards. Enquiries from Mr. W.B. Yates, C.B.E., who conducted the preliminary investigation have also failed to yield any reasons why the application for a Trade Board was not successful. The reply stated that "it may have been on account of the difficulty of differentiation between the various sections, or it may have been that it was not insufficiently paid

grades of experience and skill according to nature of work done claiming correspondingly lower or higher rates? This was the suggestion made by the Chairman of the Employers' Association, and out of this a Grading Scheme emerged. It was not a simple matter to draw up a scheme to cover all the operations required in all classes of work. But one was eventually drawn up to serve as a basis for the grading of all brassworkers, which proved acceptable to the Conciliation Board. Acceptance was subsequently endorsed by separate general meetings of employers and workmen (1).

There were to be four grades for some occupations, three for others and yet two in one class (2), and there were four recognised minimum rates of wages. Adopting numbers to indicate the grades, we may arrange the rates accordingly.

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compared with other trades". The writer is inclined to agree that differentiation problems would have arisen, but he also thinks that the investigator may only have been given an opportunity of discovering the general rates of wages paid by the larger firms.

- (1) It is reported that there were 5 dissentients among the workmen, probably journeymen who feared that any advances to underhands as a result of grading would reduce their own earnings.
- (2) The writer has been unable to secure an exact copy of the original scheme. Facts given in this text are taken from description by W. J. Davis at general meeting of the workmen. Thus, it may not be strictly accurate.



		Minimum Rate.	
		s.	d.
<u>Dressers and Finishers.</u>	Grade I (Lowest)	26/-	per week
	Grade II	29/3	" "
	Grade III	33/9	" "
	Grade IV (Highest)	38/3	" "
<u>Polishers.</u>	Grade I	26/-	" "
	Grade II	29/3	" "
	Grade III	33/9	" "
<u>Dippers and Bronzers.</u>	Grade I	26/-	" "
	Grade II	29/3	" "
	Grade III	33/9	" "
<u>Burnishers.</u>	Grade I	26/-	" "
	Grade II	29/3	" "
	Grade III	33/9	" "
<u>Repairers and Chasers.</u>	Grade II	29/3	" "
	Grade III	33/9	" "
<u>Pattern-Makers.</u>	Grade IV	38/3	" "

These rates were inclusive of the 20 per cent bonus. For dayworkers it meant that the bonus became merged in their weekly rate and practically ceased to count as a bonus. For pieceworkers, it meant that piecework prices had to be such that earnings at such prices plus a bonus of 20 per cent. would yield at least the minimum rate according to grade. Against each rate there was a general statement as to the type of work the workman was expected to be capable of performing <sup>(1)</sup>. The rates were for a working week of 54 hours, and consequently hourly rates were given to avoid dispute if less than full time were worked. It will be seen that these rates fell short of the 32/5 claimed in 1900 and 1907, except

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(1) Consideration of this is deferred, since revisions were made within a few years of the adoption of the scheme, and since no copy of the first scheme is available.

in the cases of Grades III and IV. The highest rate of 38/3 for dressers and finishers applied to workmen who had long experience, and who were expert mechanics capable of working from scale drawings and blue prints. There were no grades of pattern makers, these being highly skilled and responsible workmen. The rate of 38/3 for them was regarded as a low minimum relative to their ability. Furthermore, it will be noted that the scheme did not make any provision for the casters, a price list was already in operation for them, although this had been built up thirteen years previously and needed revision.

The Conciliation Board, then, had at last arrived at a settlement of the outstanding difficulty, and it seems odd that the idea of grading had not been applied sooner. Although the scheme was introduced by an employer, credit for having formulated the idea cannot be attributed to anyone in particular. We are reminded by the biographer <sup>(1)</sup> that as early as the year 1892 when the desire for a minimum rate was first mooted, W. J. Davis uttered these words:

"My object is to form a minimum standard which shall regulate trade custom and recognise skill, dexterity or ingenuity at their true value, and give to the best mechanics an opportunity of earning wages in proportion, and as a reward for their extra zeal and accomplishments".

But when the Minimum Rate agitation was launched, the existence of these "extra zeal and accomplishments" was not recognised,

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(1) W. A. Dalley. Op.cit. p.272.

and all workmen of 21 years of age were treated as if they were highly skilled mechanics. However, the agitations of 1900 and 1907 made possible the development of the idea. On both occasions, evidence at the proceedings contained the seeds from which a grading scheme might have sprung. In the examination of the managing director of a large firm of electrical engineers during the course of the proceedings in 1900 we find an interesting piece of interrogation:

"Question: (Advocate for employers) - Have you a suggestion to make as to the National Society having to classify its members?

Answer: - Yes, I do make that suggestion. I have heard it mentioned before that something in that way should be done, and I agree with it that there is a necessity for something to be done in that direction. There is apparently no classification, no guarantee as to what a man can do. If the Society could see its way to do as I suggest, it is a big thing they should direct their attention to. We should then get some guarantee that a man can do what he is supposed to do, whereas now we frequently find a man is not competent to carry out the work he is given to do".

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Q. The classification should be <sup>vi</sup> ~~graded~~ by skill and experience?

A. Certainly, skill and experience". (1)

A little more explicit than this was the opinion of another manufacturer from Rotherham <sup>(2)</sup> in 1907.

Q. I believe your opinion as to what would have been a cure for the discrepancy in wages is that the men should be <sup>va</sup> ~~graded~~.

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(1) Arbitration Report 1900. Eighth Day, p.64.

(2) The Brass Masters' Association contained some members from beyond the Birmingham District.



A. - Well that is a suggestion I make and have urged before, that owing to the variety of labour, some more skilled than others, it would be possible to place that labour in grades, say three grades - First for the lower class of labour comprising men who work on such tools as shapers or filing, or work of that character, Secondly - " (1)

He was interrupted here and asked whether his grading would be according to nature of product made. The burden of his reply was that he meant to imply a classification according to the nature of operations performed and not by product. He would place in the lowest grade those who were shapers on semi-automatic machines and filers working at the vice. He even went as far as to suggest suitable minimum rates for his three grades, these being:

Lowest grade - 25/- per week.

Medium grade - 30/- per week.

Highest grade - 32/6 per week.

These figures were not very far different from those actually adopted in 1910, the higher rates in the later year probably being accounted for by better conditions of trade.

The obvious question which next arises is : upon whose shoulders would responsibility for grading of the workmen lie? There were four possibilities: (1) grading by individual employers for men in their own works, (2) grading by the employers' organisation, (3) grading by an external and impartial body, and (4) grading by the men's Society. Grading by individual employers was hardly likely to prove successful;

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(1) Arbitration Report 1907. p.144.

it would lead the way to much dispute and would in no way contribute to uniformity in the trade. It was an absolute impossibility to establish complete uniformity in a trade of so many complexities, but the scheme would have defeated its own object if some measure of uniformity had not been achieved. That was one reason why employers had supported the idea; they wanted greater uniformity in wages on similar work between different factories. A grading scheme was the next best thing to the theoretically desirable general piece-work price list. Grading by employers' organisation could hardly be admitted: it would have meant a degree of interference in the affairs of one another that the dictates of competitive private enterprise would not have countenanced. It was rather open to suspicion, as well, on the part of the men. Grading by an external body was fairness itself, but were there sufficiently close connections between any body created or to be created and the ~~brasstraders~~ to make for unqualified success in working the scheme? For new entrants into the trade, this was the ideal method of procedure perhaps, but the sentiments of the thousands already in the trade required consideration. The usefulness of an external body was not altogether rejected, for, as will be seen, in the case of dispute, the aid of such a body was going to be invoked. So there remained the fourth method of application, grading by the trade union. Responsibility for grading the workmen was placed in the hands of a Grading Committee appointed by the men's Society. A workman's membership card was to indicate his grade by means of a coloured adhesive stamp, the colour

being different for each grade. In the event of an employer challenging the qualification of any workmen who had been thus graded, recourse was to be had to an examination under the auspices of the Managers of the Municipal Brass Trades' school, which was a branch of the Technical School. The complainant was not to be allowed to examine his own workman, and the examination was to be carried out in the presence of a representative of either side who was not an interested party. The result of this practical test was to be final. If the decision were adverse to the workman, it was to be at the discretion of the Society to put such workman back one grade. The Society was not bound to put a workman back a grade until three such adverse decisions had been endorsed on his card. In either event, adverse or favourable, the employer was under no obligation to reinstate the challenged workman. It was by a similar type of examination that a workman was to be tested if an employer objected to any application to be put up one grade. In such a case, an adverse decision for the workman would necessitate his remaining for at least six months in the grade held before the examination.

One may regard the institution of the Grading Scheme as the greatest gesture of recognition of the trade union that had yet emanated from the side of the employers. It was certainly responsible for increasing the strength of the union, not only in Birmingham itself but also in the



branches in the neighbourhood <sup>(1)</sup>. The advances in wages secured as a result of grading served as a big stimulus to the union. The scheme came into operation in December 1910 <sup>(2)</sup> and by the end of 1911, about 3,000 workmen had been graded. The extent of the wage advanced secured may be judged from the following table, although the fact that there were four minimum rates and not a single rate renders it impossible to gain an idea of the average earnings at that date.

Percentage Advances accruing to workman on being graded  
1910. (3)

<u>No. of workmen securing advances from grading.</u>	<u>Per cent of Total.</u>	<u>Percentage advance gained.</u>
696	24.3	Between 2½ and 5 %
804	28.0	Between 5 and 10%
501	17.9	Between 10 and 15%
402	14.0	Between 15 and 25%
451	15.8	Above 25%
2,854	100.0	

The casters, however, did not come within the

<u>(1) Membership of Birmingham Branch.</u>		<u>Wolverhampton Branch.</u>	
<u>1907-1912.</u>			
1907 - 4,513.	1910 - 4,207.	1907 - 501.	1910 - 468
1908 - 4,139.	1911 - 5,164.	1908 - 408.	1911 - 643
1909 - 3,687.	1912 - 5,336.	1909 - 426.	1912 - 628
<u>Walsall Branch.</u>		<u>Coventry Branch.</u>	
1907 - 47.	1910 - 24.	1907 - 439.	1910 - 353
1908 - 29.	1911 - 155.	1908 - 366.	1911 - 398
1909 - 21.	1912 - 405.	1909 - 285.	1912 - 569

(2) It had been adopted in October.

(3) Annual Reports, 1911-12.

compass of the grading scheme, and consequently did not benefit by any advance in prices or day work rates. During 1911, the casters were naturally agitating for better prices. In this section of the trade, a greater degree of uniformity had resulted from the price list agreed upon in 1897, although such prices were minimum prices only and not necessarily the prices paid in all establishments. No general advances in piece prices had been made since 1897, because the claim for a better list in 1900 was not successful. As a result of discussions at sub-committees of employers and workers through the Conciliation Board in 1911, a new and revised Caster's Price List came into operation from December 4th, 1911 <sup>(1)</sup>. The List, in its main form, follows the lines of that of 1897; it was in fact a trifle more comprehensive. Many prices were advanced, and minimum day work rates became much better defined. With no knowledge of the relative importance attaching to the many classes of work for which prices were arranged, it is impossible to calculate the average advances in prices secured by the new list, although it was estimated that about 1,500 casters, moulders and getters-down were entitled to advances ranging from 15 to 20 per cent <sup>(2)</sup>. Taking out the main prices in each list we are able to gain some impression of the alterations.

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<sup>B.7.</sup>  
 (1) See Appendix for the full List.

(2) Annual Reports, 1911-12.

	<u>Price per cwt.</u>		<u>Increase (↑) or Decrease (-) per cent.</u>		
	<u>1897</u>	<u>1911</u>			
	<u>list</u>	<u>list</u>			
	s.	d.	s.	d.	
<u>Cock, Steam and Plumbers' Work.</u>					
Cock and Plumbers' Work.	10.	0	9.	8	-3.3
Screws and Strips.	10.	6	11.	0*	+4.8
Cock Work, White Metal.	14.	0	14.	0	No change.
Cock Work, Special Metal.	18.	0	15.	0 )	No change.
Cock Work, Special (if dried)	-	-	18.	0 )	
Cock Work, Gun Metal.	10.	0	9.	8	-3.3
Mill and Forge Brasses.	5.	6	5.	6	No change.
<u>Cabinet Castings.</u>					
Fine Work.	21.	0	22.	0	+4.8
Common Work.	9.	0	9.	2	+2.4
Green Work.)	14.	0	from		No change.
)			14.	0	
Bedstead Work.	11.	0	11.6	6	+4.5
<u>Chandelier and Gas Work.</u>					
Common Work.	9.	0	9.	8	+4.8
Fine Work.	21.	0	22.	0	+4.8

\* "Strips" only in 1911 List.

The 1911 List for fine chandelier work was a trifle different from the 1897 list, three other prices being included for "odd-sides" of different weights. These were:

Odd-sides weighing under 3lbs and over 2½lbs. 27/- per cwt.

Odd-sides weighing under 2½lbs and over 2 lbs. 32/- per cwt.

Odd-sides weighing under 2lbs. 42/- per cwt.

The principle involved in these prices graduated according to weight per mould was later to be extended beyond payment for



odd-sides<sup>(1)</sup>, and for that reason the feature should not pass unnoticed. Of course it cannot be assumed that the weekly earnings of casters would be increased or decreased in proportion to the increase or decrease in <sup>ie</sup> piece-work prices. It should be borne in mind also, that these prices were arranged so that the total sum for work done at such prices included the amount that the head-caster paid his moulder. In any case, there is no information available as to what extent existing prices were higher than the minimum prices of the 1897 list, and therefore, as to whether any material advances accrued when the new list of 1911 came into operation. Generally, it would be true to say that 9/- per cwt. was a fairly uniform rate in the trade for "common" cabinet and gas work after 1897, and that the new rates of 9/2 and 9/3 respectively would become the usual rates after 1911. As the majority of casters were pieceworkers, the statement that the new list meant advances ranging from 15 to 20 per cent would seem to be an exaggeration. The maximum increase in any price does not exceed <sup>8</sup> ~~10~~ per cent., and in some cases, prices were less in the 1897 list, e.g., cock and plumbers' work, and "shoes and plates", and "pulley-bowls" in the cabinet section.

If we turn to the new day-work rates, the advance does not equal 15 per cent either. In fact, although the minimum day-work rate of the principal hand engaged in "common"

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(1) See List at present in operation. Appendix. B. 8.

work was increased from 36/- plus bonus (i.e., 43/2½) to 38/- plus bonus (i.e., 45/7), that of the moulder, the second workman was reduced from 32/- plus bonus (i.e., 38/5) to 30/- plus bonus (i.e., 36/-). No change in day-work rates, however, was made in the "plumbing" department, these remaining at 43/2½ and 38/5 (1). Two new day-work rates were established in the 1911/1st, one for the most highly skilled workman, and the other for the unskilled labourer. The "fine and false cored" day-work caster in the cabinet and chandelier sections was guaranteed a minimum rate of 44/- plus bonus (i.e., 52/9), and the "getter-down" in the gas fittings and electric branch a minimum of 25/- plus bonus (i.e., 30/-). The day-work rates, then, in the casting shop became:

Cabinet, Chandelier, Gas-fittings Work. Per Week.

Principal hand ("Fine" work)	52/9
Principal hand ("Common" work)	45/7
Moulder ("Common" or "Fine")	36/-
Getter-down ("Common" Gasfittings work)	30/-

Cock, Plumbers' Work etc.

First hand	43/2
Second hand	38/4

A comparison with the minimum rates for dressers and finishers in the Grading Scheme, shows that workers in the

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(1) The writer has been unable to discover the motive for increasing the rate of the principal hand by 2/- plus bonus, and at the same time decreasing the rate of the moulder by a similar figure. Neither has he been able to discover why no change was made for water-fittings work.

casting shop were rated at slightly higher figures. The principal "tub-hand" was one of the most important workmen in the establishment. The quality of the brasswork depended on his knowledge and experience of mixing metals, and on his acquired intuition as to the correct moment to perform the operation of pouring into the moulds. Not only was work in the casting shop disagreeable and laborious, but it was generally recognised to be unhealthy on account of the heavy white fumes containing zinc-oxide which hung about the shop (1). These factors were justifications for the higher rates.

COMPARISON BETWEEN MINIMUM RATES OF WAGES FOR DRESSERS,  
FINISHERS, AND POLISHERS, AND FOR CASTERS AND MOULDERS.  
1911.

<u>Dressers, Finishers, Moulders. etc.</u>	<u>Casters, Moulders. etc.</u>
Fourth Grade - 38/3	Principal Hand ("Fine" work) 52/9
Third Grade - 33/9	Principal Hand ("Common" work) 45/7
Second Grade - 29/3	Moulder 36/-
First Grade - 26/-	Getter-down 30/-

Although day work rates had been incorporated in the price list of 1897, it is more correct to say that the years 1910 and 1911 really mark the inauguration of minimum rates of wages in the Birmingham brass trades. This period coincided

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(1) The unhealthy nature of the work has given rise to Factory Regulations dealing with the provision of washing facilities, structural alterations to provide adequate exhaust for the "sulphurous" fumes, and the removal of female coremakers from the casting shop.



also with a revival of interest in the trade union. The employers accepted the union, cast aside their antagonisms and showed greater readiness to coöperate in the task of regularising wages conditions in the trade. Much less complaint was heard about the smaller firms after those years.

Dissatisfaction among the men still reigned in some sections. It has already been pointed out that the men much resented the employment of women in the polishing shops. Besides, the polishers were not quite satisfied with their position under the grading scheme. So a movement was set on foot with the dual object of drawing public attention to circumstances in which women were employed at what was considered an unhealthy occupation, and of agitating for an increase in the minimum rates of wages for polishers. With regard to the former question, it should be borne in mind that the factory inspectors had been able to improve matters considerably by their insistence on the provision of adequate devices for removing the dust in the polishing shop from the atmosphere in which the polishers had to carry on their daily work. Something further than this was now required; the men were desirous of having the trade of metal polishing scheduled under the "unhealthy" clause of the Factory and Workshop Act. It was hoped that if a Public Enquiry were held into conditions in the trade, not only would specific regulations be imposed, but also the employment of women may be prohibited in such a "filthy and degrading work". This was the moral and social viewpoint; but there was another factor

of significance for the male polishers, in that the prohibition of employment of women would remove a competitive element from the trade. The second question was taken before the Conciliation Board, with the result that the grading scheme was revised for polishers. The situation was met by the creation of three further grades, making six in all. There was to be an improvers' rate for youths of 20 years of age who had been in the trade three years, fixed at 22/6. After this came the three rates of 26/-, 29/3 and 35/9, and beyond this again there were two rates of 36/- and 40/6 <sup>(1)</sup>. The former of these rates applied to the polisher who could finish his work outright, that is, who could perform all the processes carried on with the different bobs and mops until the work went to the lacquering room; the other was for the foreman and expert workman in every particular. This was certainly carrying grading to extremes, but the existence of six different rates serves to substantiate what has already been stated with respect to the great range of skill to be found among brassworkers. On the whole, the Grading Scheme had worked smoothly and had provided a remedy for what ~~was~~ at one time appeared to be a hopeless problem. Even the journeyman system could not prove an obstacle. In fact, the grading scheme was likely to weaken this system, inasmuch as an underhand could claim the right to be graded as well as a journeyman. It was becoming more usual to pay all men from

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(1) Annual Reports, 1911-1912.

the office, and quite apart from this, the underhand was exerting more influence in the trade union.

The Brassworkers' Society was becoming more and more powerful at this time, and was extending its sphere of influence well beyond Birmingham. The brass trades were mainly localised in the Birmingham District, but a good deal of brasswork was done in other centres, particularly in London and in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Outside the West Midlands, it was mainly plumbers' work and steam and water fittings that were produced, and in many engineering establishments there would be a brass shop. The total membership of the Society at the end of 1913 amounted to 12,947 <sup>(1)</sup>, which the central branch in Birmingham accounted for 6,479, or about 50 per cent. The total membership for branches in the West Midland area amounted at the close of 1913 to 8,921 divided between the branches as follows:

Birmingham	-	6,479
Wolverhampton	-	651
Coventry	-	620
Walsall	-	586
Dudley	-	562
Wednesbury	-	23
Total		<u>8,921</u>

that is, somewhere about 70 per cent of its strength emanated from the Birmingham District. The Brassworkers' Society,

(1) Annual Reports, 1912-13. The great strides made during these years may be shown by the following figures for the total membership of all branches of the union:

1910 - 7,373  
 1911 - 8,989  
 1912 - 10,331  
 1913 - 12,947



although national in scope, was not the sole organisation catering for brassworkers. There was a separate organisation in Scotland, another in London (many years previously, there had been a secession of the London members from the Brassworkers' Society), and yet a third called the United Journeyman Brassfounders' Association which derived most of its following from Lancashire. It must not be assumed, however, that the 8921 members in the West Midland region were all workers in brass, for early in the new century, the name of the Society had been amended to read National Amalgamated Society of Brassworkers' and Metal Mechanics. Thus, the union claimed many workers in other metal trades, such as cycle polishers, needle and fish-hook makers and so on. There were over a thousand members at Redditch at the end of 1913, drawn from cycle works and the needle-shops.

The years 1912 and 1913 had been favourable for trade unionism throughout the country, and the Brassworkers' Society had shared in this wave of prosperity. Trade had been active, and it was not long before further advances in wages were secured in the Birmingham District. The Grading Scheme underwent another revision in 1913, by which the minimum rates for each grade were increased. As this is the first copy of the full scheme obtainable, it is reproduced here almost in its entirety so that the reader may have an opportunity of glancing at the manner in which the work is apportioned between the grades. The increases in rates were no more nor less than agreed increases applicable to each grade, and were

not to be taken as thereby entitling a workman to pass into a higher grade. It must also be reiterated that in view of the complex nature of the brass trades and of the constantly varying work undertaken, it was hardly possible to enumerate in the list of qualifications every process or sub-division of the different branches of the trade. Hence, the actual qualifications contained in the scheme merely stood as bases upon which the workman should be graded. Not only was his work as a specialist to be considered, but also his general usefulness as a member of the trade. The minimum rates were fixed on an estimate of average ability, they were based on the performance not of the fastest nor of the slowest workman. For purposes of reference or interpretation, examples of various classes of brasswork - gas, water, electric, cabinet and fender - were exhibited, sealed and labelled by representatives of both employers and workmen. Every precaution had been taken, then, to ensure the smooth working of the scheme, and by the time of this revision in 1913, both sides had grown accustomed to the new regime.

There were altogether seven grades, with qualifications attached as follows:

GRADE A. (Yellow) Improvers of 21 years of age.  
Minimum Wage: 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. and a fraction per hour, or per week 25/-.

GRADE B. (Green) 21 years of age. Three years' qualification in the trade.

Dressers - who turn over plain work and are used to tapping and plate screwing and can file-over at the vice.

Polishers - Those who have worked at their trade three years and who emery-bob, rough or mop common work and finish barrelled work.

Dippers - Ordinary dippers and bronzers.

Burnishers - who burnish tubes and common work at the lathe or vice.

Chasers and Repairers - who have had three years' continuous experience in the branch.

Semi-skilled Makers-Up - who bend tubes by the block, file and tie on, and braze common and medium class work.

Stampers - who run their own forces and stamp ordinary shallow work.

Minimum Wage.  $6\frac{1}{8}$ d. less a fraction per hour, or per week 27/6.

GRADE C. (Brown) 21 years of age, with Four years' qualification in the trade.

Dressers - who turn, screw inside and out, and file flat and true at the vice.

Polishers - Those who have worked at their trade Five years, who either emery-bob, rough, or mop and finish any common work.

Dippers - All round dippers and bronzers.

Burnishers - Advanced burnishers used to hook and straight burnishing on the vice and shell work on the lathe.

Chasers and Repairers - who chase and repair better class work

Makers-Up - who bend, file, fit and solder better class work.

Stampers - who run their own forces and stamp deep shell work.

Minimum Wage.  $6\frac{7}{8}$ d. and a fraction per hour, or per week 31/-.

GRADE D. (Blue) 21 years of age with Six years' qualification in the trade.

Dressers - who turn, screw inside and out, plug and seat, file flat and square at the vice, and finish their own work throughout.

Polishers - Those who are experts in grades above, and do ALL (not any) of the above processes in common work; those who do all the above processes in above grades, and emery-bob, and mop best work.

Dippers - who qualify in the preceding grade, and also do art bronzing and colouring, or electro-plating or have a knowledge of electro-plating and solutions.

Burnishers - who are expert hook and straight burnishers at the vice and satisfactorily burnish deep thin shell work at the lathe.



Chasers and Repairers - who properly chase and repair best work, and are experts at their trade.

Makers-Up - who have advanced knowledge and experience of all classes of trade, or branch in which they are employed.

Stampers - who undertake all classes of deep or shallow work in all strengths of the metal used.

Minimum Wage.  $7\frac{3}{4}$  d. and a fraction per hour, or per week 35/-.

#### GRADE D. (2) (Grey)

Polishers only. Those who rough or finish best work.

Minimum Wage.  $8\frac{1}{4}$  d. less a fraction per hour, or per week 37/-.

#### GRADE E. (1) (Red)

Dressers - who have a complete expert knowledge and experience of all classes of lathe and vice work, or work to Blue Prints or Drawings.

Art Bronzers - who have an expert knowledge of art bronzing or metal colouring, or electro depositing and solutions.

Chasers

Patternmakers

Burnishers - who are experts in speed and quality in all classes of work.

Makers-Up - who make up best work throughout.

Stampers - who are experts in all classes of work.

Minimum Wage.  $8\frac{5}{8}$  d. ~~per hour~~ and a fraction per hour, or per week 39/-

#### GRADE E. (2) (Mauve)

Polishers only. First-class expert in all processes - in fact, a first-rate workman; or charge-hand, with the duty of being responsible for all work, order, etc., in the shop.

Minimum Wage. 9 d. less a fraction per hour, or per week 41/-

It will be useful to compare the rates for different occupations between the original scheme of 1910 and the revised scheme of 1913.

Weekly Minimum Rates.  
(inclusive of Percentage Bonus)

	<u>1910</u> <u>Scheme.</u>	<u>1913.</u> <u>Scheme.</u>	<u>Percentage</u> <u>Increase.</u>
	s. d.	s. d.	
<u>Dressers and Finishers.</u>			
Grade A. (Improvers).	-	25/-	-
Grade B.	26/-	27/6	5.8
Grade C.	29/3	31/-	6.0
Grade D.	33/9	35/-	3.7
Grade E.	38/3	39/-	2.0
<u>Polishers. (1)</u>			
Grade A. (Improvers).	22/6	25/-	-
Grade B.	26/-	27/6	5.8
Grade C.	29/3	31/-	6.0
Grade D. (1)	33/9	35/-	3.7
Grade D. (2)	36/-	37/-	2.8
Grade E. (2)	40/6	41/-	1.2
<u>Dippers and Bronzers.</u>			
Grade B.	26/-	27/6	5.8
Grade C.	29/3	31/-	6.0
Grade D.	33/9	35/-	3.7
Grade E. (Art Bronzers).	-	39/-	-
<u>Burnishers. (As for Dippers and Bronzers above).</u>			
<u>Chasers and Repairers.</u>			
Grade B.	-	27/6	-
Grade C.	29/3	31/-	6.0
Grade D.	33/9	35/-	3.7
Grade E.	-	39/-	-

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(1) The rates given in the first column are the revised ones of 1911.

Weekly Minimum Rates.  
(Inclusive of Percentage Bonus).

<u>1910</u> <u>Scheme.</u>	<u>1913</u> <u>Scheme.</u>	<u>Percentage</u> <u>Increase.</u>
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Makers-up.

Grade B. (Semi-skilled).	No record	Rates as
Grade C.	of sepa-	for
Grade D.	rate rates	Dressers,
Grade E.	for 1910.	Dippers, etc.

Stampers. (As for Makers-up, above).Pattern-Makers.

Grade E.	38/3	39/-	2.0
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At the same time as the minimum rates were revised, the percentage bonus for all workmen other than casters was increased from 20 per cent. to 25 per cent. In the cases of Grade B and Grade C, the increases in minimum rates between the 1910 figures and those for 1913 were greater than if the only alteration had been an advance in bonus from 20 to 25 per cent.<sup>(1)</sup> But this was not so with Grades D and E, neither with the two special grades D(2) and E(2) for Polishers. The lower grade workmen, then, received proportionately greater advances under the new minimum rates than the more skilled operatives. Upon adoption of the revised rates by the Conciliation Board, it was agreed that no further advances in wages be asked for during three years from the date of the first payment of the new rates, that was from August 22nd or 23rd (according to

(1) This would have been equivalent to an advance of 4.2 per cent. on minimum rates.



to pay-day), 1913. The intervention of the Great War, of course, prevented this stabilisation from taking effect, but it should be noted that such a long period wages contract was an unusual feature in collective bargaining.

As the revision of the Grading Scheme coincided approximately with the opening of a new era in wages adjustments through the Government arrangements during the Great War, this is a convenient moment to look back over the fifty years covered by this history of wages negotiations and collective bargaining, in the Birmingham brass trades. We have seen that inherent individualism both among employers and workmen checked the progress of all the incipient labour organisations that were attempted before the year 1872. Such sporadic efforts having their origin as far back as 1824 were doomed to failure on account of the keenness of competition in business, the ease with which new entrants managed to maintain themselves in business, and the mutual jealousies of the journeymen workers themselves. After 1872, the idea of trade union organisation slowly gained ground, and finally succeeded in achieving some measure of confidence in its activities on the part of the employers. Recognition did not come easily, but eventually even this was obtained to a very substantial degree in the Grading Scheme of 1910. The first ten years of the twentieth century were probably years when both men and masters nursed bitterness more than at any other period, save

perhaps in 1889, when the only real strike had occurred. Yet, the tenth year brought the Grading Scheme, at the instance of an employer ! Out of chaos, order had been evolved, and although conditions in the finishing sections of the brass trades had not been suitable for the drawing up of uniform piecework lists, except in two minor cases, the Grading Scheme with its minimum rates had provided the only possible form of uniformity that was open to both sides. This scheme was sufficiently elastic to provide for special skill and adaptability, it recognised the existence of individual differences in workmanship, and allowed the skilled and experienced workman to earn his just reward over and above the prescribed minimum rate for his particular grade. The casters had been catered for by a uniform price-list, in which the prices given were minimum prices. To his earnings on the basis of these prices was added the bonus of 20 per cent. The day-work caster, with his moulder and other assistants were also entitled to minimum weekly rates of wages, inclusive of the 20 per cent. bonus. The percentage bonus, by means of which increases or decreases in wages had been effected since 1872, stood at 25 per cent. for workers covered by the Grading Scheme, although it was a much less obvious feature than before. <sup>(1)</sup> Thus, in 1913, trade union

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(1) The retention of the percentage bonus may at first sight seem superfluous, but there were grounds for this. In the case of piecework, the old piece prices need have undergone no revision (except perhaps in the cases of Grade B and Grade C work). Whereas, previously, 20% would be added to earnings on the existing piece prices, henceforward 25% would be added, and the earnings would still be within the new minimum rates.

district rates were realities in the brass trades, even though they may not have been so well established as those for engineers.

Organisation in the trade had undergone changes of far-reaching importance. The introduction of machinery and the gradual development of the larger business had done much to undermine the journeyman system, and further mechanisation as a result of war-time exigencies was to drive the system still further out of the trade. The underhand was taking a more active interest in the union which in the years before 1913 had been more alert to his disabilities, and this again was a sign of increasing strength in labour ranks. As we have seen, membership of the union in the Birmingham and surrounding district, bordered upon 9000 at the close of 1913, compared with 5,500 at the time of the Arbitration of 1907. On the other side, the small master, shop owner, or "garret" worker was not such a potent influence, although he still existed in the district. Employers also had shown a greater readiness to combine in their association. <sup>(1)</sup>

Relations between both parties were amicable enough, backed by a tradition of friendliness, conciliation and arbitration. In spite of the struggles described in the preceding pages, there had been few serious dislocations due to strikes and lock-outs in the brass trades. Threats may

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(1) Master Brassfounders' Association.



have been exchanged, but only on one occasion had it been necessary to order the complete withdrawal of labour, and then in one branch of the trade only. The revived Conciliation Board was working smoothly, and both employers and workmen felt satisfied with their lot, so satisfied, in fact, that a three years' understanding had been entered into for the stabilisation of working conditions. Then came 1914, and war, and further change.

## CHAPTER 7.

### War and Post-war Movements.

- (i) Up to February 1917.
- (ii) From February 1917 to April 1921.
- (iii) From April 1921 to January 1922.
- (iv) From January 1922 to October 1922.
- (v) After October 1922.
- (vi) The present situation in the  
Brassworking Trades.

CHAPTER 7.War and Post - war Movements.

During the war, the boom which immediately followed it and the subsequent slump, wages in the brass trades have followed much the same course as in the general engineering trades and for the sake of convenience, we may deal with such changes, for the whole of the period since 1914, in five distinct stages.

- (1) Up to February, 1917.
- (2) From February 1917 to April 1921.
- (3) From April 1921 to January 1922.
- (4) From January 1922 to October 1922.
- (5) After October 1922.

Wages adjustments were all effected on a different basis in each of these periods. The first two periods were times of advances in wages throughout the War and immediate post-war boom; the next two witnessed continual reductions; and since October 1922, there has been one reduction and one advance.

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(1) Up to February, 1917.

In the early part of 1914, trade was not so active as it had been throughout 1913 and 10 per cent of the brass-workers were on short-time in January 1914. (1) The outbreak of war caused further dislocation and was responsible for throwing many out of employment. Such conditions were only

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(1). "Labour Gazette". February, 1914.



transitory, for in May 1915, it was reported that 50 per cent of the brassworkers were working overtime. (1) This proportion had swelled to 60 per cent in June (2) and to 80 per cent in August. (3) The brass trades were, by that time, experiencing a rush of orders on government contracts and were as busy as any trade in the district. The rise in general prices had been noticeable throughout the winter of 1914-15, so that an advance in wages of 5 per cent was most acceptable in March 1915. As evidence of the good feelings between masters and men, it should be placed on permanent record that this first war-time advance of 5 per cent was not the outcome of any agitation on the part of the operatives. The employers' organisation made a voluntary concession in the matter; an unprecedented occurrence, surely, for an employers' association to offer an advance in wages on its own initiative ! The gesture has been described as "the most striking event in trade union history." (4) This advance accrued to dayworkers and pieceworkers, under all grades except Grade A. Improvers covered by that grade received a flat-rate advance of 2s. per week, which represented more than a 5 per cent increase.

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- (1) Ibid June 1915.
  - (2) Ibid July 1915.
  - (3) September 1915. (Ibid)
  - (4) Annual Reports, 1914.

This first advance of 5 per cent was soon followed by another 5 per cent in August 1915, making the total war advance up to 10 per cent to dayworkers and pieceworkers.

Improvers again received an extra 2s. per week. From July, 1916, further advances were made but not in the form of percentage additions. Neither was it a flat-rate increment of the same magnitude for all workers. For men who were earning at that time, inclusive of war bonuses, 38s.6d. or more per week, the advance was 2s. per week, whereas the lower grade workmen received 3s., 4s. or 5s., according to earnings. Advances under this arrangement, for timeworkers only, were :-

DRESSERS AND FINISHERS.

Per week.

Grade A (Improvers)	5s.
Grade B (Semi-skilled)	4s.
Grade C (Four years in the trade)	3s.
Grade D (1) (Six years in the trade)	2s.
Grade D (2) (Polishers only)	2s.
Grade E (1) (Experts)	2s.
Grade E (2) (Expert polishers).	2s.

CASTING-SHOP.

Getter-down	3s.
Other hands	2s.

Assuming that basis time-rates coincided with earnings, we arrive at the absolute amount of advances received by each grade at the end of 1916.

	Basis Rate	Advance 5 per cent March 1915.	Advance 5 per cent Aug. 1915.	Advance July, 1916.	Total Advances to 1916.	per- centage increase
<u>Dressers and Finish- ers.</u>	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	
Grade A	25s.	2s. 0.	2s. 0d.	5s. 0.	7s. 0.	28.
Grade B	27s.	1s. 4d.	1s. 5d.	4s. 0.	6s. 9.	25
Grade C	31s.	1s. 6d.	1s. 7d.	3s. 0.	6s. 1d.	19.6
" D (1)	35s.	1s. 9d.	1s. 9d.	2s. 0.	5s. 6d.	15.7
" D (2)	37s.	1s. 10d.	1s. 10d.	2s. 0.	5s. 8d.	15.3
" E (1)	39s.	1s. 11d.	1s. 11d.	2s. 0..	5s. 10d.	14.9
" E (2)	41s.	2s. 0d.	2s. 1/4d.	2s. 0.	6s. 1.	14.8

Casting-shop. \*

(1) Chandelier, Gasfittings  
and Cabinet Sections:-

Principal Hand (Fine Work ).	52s. 9.	2s. 7 1/2d.	2s. 7 1/2d.	2s. 0.	7s. 3d.	13.7
" (Common Work)	45s. 7.	2s. 2d.	2s. 3d.	2s. 0.	6s. 5d.	14.1
Moulder	36s.	1s. 9d.	1s. 10.	2s. 0.	5s. 7d.	15.1
Getter- down	30s.	1s. 6d.	1s. 6d.	3s. 0.	6s. 0d.	20.

(2) Water and Steam  
Fittings Section.

First Hand	43s. 2.	2s. 2d.	2s. 2d.	2s. 0.	6s. 4d.	14.7
Second Hand	38s. 4d.	1s. 11d.	2s. 0.	2s. 0.	5s. 11d.	15.5.

\* The pre-war Bonus of 20 per cent has been added to Basis Rates.



The increases made in 1916, then, had resulted in the lower grades of workers having received proportionately greater advances than higher grade men. The absolute amount of the advances differed from grade to grade. Calculation of wages were beginning to get complicated, especially for piece-work casters. The weekly earnings of these were made up of earnings at price-list rates, plus the pre-war bonus of 20 per cent, plus 10 per cent, on both of these together, plus the 1916 advance of 2s.

Subsequent movements from February 1917 were not conducted independently between the Brassworkers' Society and the Master Brassfounders' Association and the machinery of the Conciliation Board was temporarily replaced by the arrangements under the Committee on Production, the Interim Court of Arbitration and the Industrial Court. (1) These will be considered in the next stage of war-time movements.

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(1) For a description and historical account of the work of these bodies, see A. G. B. Fisher - "Some Problems of Wages and their Regulation in Great Britain since 1918."

(ii) February 1917 to April 1921.

By February 1917, the functions of the Committee on Production had been enlarged considerably. Originally, the Committee had been set up early in 1915 to superintend the production of munitions and to take steps to ensure that a sufficient supply of war materials was forthcoming. Later, in July 1915, the functions of the Committee with regard to output of war materials had been taken over by the newly formed Ministry of Munitions; but from February 1915, it had been sitting as an Arbitration Tribunal, without any statutory element of compulsion attaching to its awards. The work in this direction was recognized to be useful, and the Committee became definitely on its own recommendation an Arbitration Tribunal for the hearing of claims for wages adjustments. In 1917, its importance in the regulation of wages was much augmented when it was enacted that its awards should be made applicable to firms which were not parties to the original reference. The extension of its power in this way was a check on any upsetting influences the non-associated firm might have. It was the first step in the direction of compulsory arbitration.

The advantages of such a tribunal were soon recognized in the engineering industry, the most vital of all our industries for war-time needs. In February 1917, an agreement was reached between the Engineering Employers' Federation and many trades unions in engineering and foundry trades, whereby it was decided that wages in those trades

were to be reviewed periodically by the Committee on Production, at intervals of four months. The Brassworkers' Society was one of the parties to the agreement, and wage advances in the period with which we are now dealing were applied to the brass trades through a joint district committee representing the engineering and allied trades unions in the Birmingham area.

(1)  
The basis of the agreement, which was national in scope, was that existing arrangements and practices for the adjustment of wages disputes should be suspended until the termination of the war, or for a further period by mutual agreement. The procedure was that the Committee on Production should consider in the months of April, June and October what alterations in wages were to take effect in the trades subject to the agreement, if claims were made for alteration. Such alterations were not to be considered as variations of any existing basis rates, but were intended to be war-time expedients, changes due entirely to the abnormal conditions created by the war. Although the awards of the Committee were to be applied nationally, there was nothing in the agreement to prevent either side from bringing up special district cases for the consideration of the Committee. This latter provision proved to be a valuable one, for through its agency, a levelling-up of wages between different districts

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(1) See Appendix G. for full text of agreement.



became possible, to the great benefit of workmen in any district where wages had been relatively low. The Engineering Employers' Federation and the fifty trade unions signatories to the agreement also drew up a memorandum recommending to the government that arrangements be made whereby all employers in the trade or trades affected should be subject to the awards which might be made by the Committee, by virtue of the agreement. (1)

Actually, it was open to either party, usually the trade union, to bring the case of any particular firm to the notice of the Committee if an award were not rightly being carried into effect. Many instances of interpretation had to be brought before the Committee when doubts existed as to whether any class of workers was covered by the awards.

Prior to 1917, the Committee on Production had been approached to settle claims in the engineering and foundry trades. These had been mainly district claims, and advances made were more or less the same for each district. In 1915, timeworkers generally had been granted an advance of 4/- per week, and pieceworkers had been awarded a bonus of 10 per cent. on earnings. In 1916, timeworkers received a further advance of 3/-, no corresponding increment falling to pieceworkers. These advances were "war wages recognized as due to and dependent on the existence of the abnormal conditions prevailing

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(1) Ministry of Labour Pamphlet. Wages and Arbitration Department. General awards of the Committee on Production Interim Court of Arbitration, and Industrial Court, relating to Engineering and Foundry Trades. 1920.

(1)  
 in consequence of the war". Thus, in the engineering and foundry trades, by the end of 1916, over practically the whole country, fairly uniform advances amounting to about 7/- per week on time rates and 10 per cent. on piece-rate earnings had been obtained. We have seen that in the Birmingham brass trades, workers had received two bonuses amounting to 10 per cent. altogether, with additional advances ranging from 2/- to 5/- per week, according to grade. We have seen, also that all workers had not received the same absolute amount in advances at the date of the joint agreement in 1917.

Such differences, not only between grade and grade, but also between district and district, had to be taken into account when the Committee on Production first took action under the agreement. In its first award, dated March 1st. 1917, the Committee granted to timeworkers an advance of 5/- per week plus any amount that was required to make the total war bonus with this 5/- of any worker up to 12/- per week. So, all timeworkers in the engineering trades, from April 1917, commenced with a flat rate bonus of 12/-. It will be seen from the table on p.222 that the advances under this heading for brassworkers were:-

(1)

DRESSERS AND FINISHERS.CASTING-SHOP.

	s. d.		s. d.
Grade A.	5/-	Principal Hand.	5/7
" B.	5/3	(Chandelier, Gasfittings and Cabinet Work.)	
" C.	5/11		
" D(1)	6/6	First Hand.	5/8
" D(2)	6/4	(Water and Steam Fittings Work)	
" E(1)	6/2	Moulder.	6/5
" E(2)	5/11	Getter-down.	6/-

The Committee did not make a similar award for pieceworkers,<sup>(2)</sup> although they also obtained the 5/- advance. Flat rate advances for pieceworkers commenced, then, in April 1917, at 5/- instead of 12/-, the pieceworker retaining the advantage of any percentage bonuses he had gained previous to that date. The advances were to be paid to workmen over 18 years of age, and boys and youths between the ages of 14 and 18 were awarded 2/6 for a full ordinary week.

The second review in accordance with the terms of the engineering agreement resulted in an advance of 3/- to timeworkers and pieceworkers over 18 years of age, and of 1/6 to those under 18. These further advances were payable from August 1st. 1917. Rather a complicating factor was introduced by the two wages Orders issued by the Ministry of Munitions<sup>(3)</sup> later in 1917, whereby fully qualified timeworkers, over 21

(1) These figures were taken from a pamphlet supplied by the Brassworkers' Society. The amounts given for total advances in the table on page 222 were derived from these figures.

(2) The term "pieceworker" meant a worker engaged on straight piece-work, or under a premium bonus system, or under any other system of payment by result.

(3) The Skilled Timeworkers (Engineers and Moulders) Wages Orders No. 1061. 1917.  
The Timeworkers (Engineering and Foundry) Wages Order No. 1301. 1917.



years of age, engaged on "war work", were granted a bonus of 12½ per cent. on their total earnings<sup>(1)</sup> (inclusive of flat-rate war bonuses). It was definitely stipulated that such percentage bonus was not to be considered an addition to standard time rates, that is, was not to be merged in any existing basis rates. Both of these Orders were retrospective the bonus to be paid as from October 12th. 1917. This "Churchill" bonus was applied to engineering shops, boiler-shops, foundries, ship-building and ship-repairing establishments, iron and steel works, electricity generating stations and electrical contracting trades, nut and bolt trade, brass foundries and brass works, bridge-building and constructional engineering, hollowware<sup>e</sup> manufacture, spring-making works, hot-stampings works, tube works, and wagon-building works. Thus, it covered a very wide field in the engineering and foundry trades. Later, in January 1918, when pieceworkers had expressed resentment at the non-payment of such bonus to them, another Order issued by the Ministry of Munitions, extended a bonus of 7½ per cent. on total earnings to pieceworkers over 21 years of age, such bonus dating from January 1st. 1918. By that date, another four-monthly review had been made by the Committee on Production, and from December 1917, further flat-rate advances of 5/- to timeworkers and pieceworkers over 18 years of age, and of 2/6 a week to those under 18, were made.

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(1) Hereafter referred to as the "Churchill" Bonus.

In March 1918, the opinion of the Committee on Production was that conditions did not warrant any further general alteration of wages, but both applications for increases made later in that year were favourably received by the Committee. Two further flat rate advances were made; from August 10th., 3/6 and 1/9 per week for men and youths respectively, and from December 1st., 5/- and 2/6 per week. By that time the war had terminated, and legislative arrangements had been made whereby the Committee on Production was to be superseded by a statutory Interim Court of Arbitration to carry out the same functions in wages questions. (1) It was agreed by the parties to the 1917 Engineering agreement that they should follow the same <sup>four</sup> ~~three~~ monthly procedure under this new tribunal as they did under the Committee on Production; it was but a change in name and not in method for the engineering unions. (2)

Up to the time that the Interim Court became responsible for wages adjustments, advances had been made to timeworkers amounting to 28/6 in the form of flat rate advances plus the "Churchill" Bonus of 12½ % on total earnings. Piece-workers had not gained as much, in view of the fact that the advances they had secured prior to April 1917 were not made up to a uniform 7/- by the Committee on Production; besides, the "Churchill" Bonus was at the rate of 7½ per cent. for them.

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(1) Under Wages (Temporary Regulation) Act, 1918.

(2) Between July and Nov. 1918, four unions had withdrawn from the agreement, but those affecting the interests of brass-workers were still parties.

The pieceworker was probably just as well provided for with piece-rate earnings plus 10 per cent. plus  $21/6$  plus  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of total as the timeworker with basis-rate plus  $28/6$  plus  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of total earnings. No further advances were made until December 1919, although claims had been brought before the Court twice before that, in accordance with the four monthly procedure. In the first instance, the engineering unions had made somewhat extravagant applications for increases in wages, with a further demand that all war wages (inclusive of the "Churchill" Bonus) be added to the recognized standard time rates.<sup>(1)</sup> Although the wages (Temporary Regulations) Act had placed a strong lever in the hands of the trades unions by virtue of its provision relating to "prescribed" rates of wages, the Interim Court did not consider it a part of its duty to consolidate war bonuses and include them as trade union basis rates. Such was within the province of direct negotiation between employers and unions, rather than the concern of the Interim Court. Theoretically, advances granted by the Court still fell under the heading of changes due to the abnormal conditions arising out of the war; consequently, in its consideration of claims submitted to it, reference was made to the state of the index number for working-class cost of living. However, as has been pointed out by one writer, "the Court never made any attempt to follow the "Labour Gazette" index number with even

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(1) Quarterly Journal Brassworkers, No.3. May 1919.  
 Also A.G.B.Fisher. Op.cit. p.34.



a "show of precision". (1) After giving due weight to all considerations, the award (2) held that the claims of the unions had not been established. Three months later, the unions came forward with similar claims, the employers on this occasion counter-claiming for a reduction of 5/-. The cost of living index number certainly showed some decline at this stage, but the Court made no award in either direction. Uncertainty with regard to the future course of prices seems to have been the deciding factor in the making of this award. (3) At the third time of asking, in November 1919, the unions succeeded in obtaining an increase of 5/- per week to time-workers and pieceworkers. The reason for the making of this award would appear to have been an anticipation of the future trend of prices rather than the relative conditions of cost of living as it stood at November 1919. If one can ascribe any principle at all to the wages adjustments that had been effected under this centralized government machinery, in this last award a slight shifting may be detected in the motives which guided those who bore the responsibility for adjustments. Cost of living was probably the primary factor even in this case but the award also referred to the state of trade and the demands for the products of the engineering trades, a first step in the direction of accepting "value of work" instead of movements in cost of living as a basis for wages adjustments. The award also pointed to the disadvantages arising from the four monthly

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(1) A. G. B. Fisher. Op.cit. p.35.

(2) Issued March, 19th. 1919.

(3) See p.34. A.G.B.Fisher. Op.cit.

review, in that such short period fluctuations militated against stability, rendering it difficult for employers to quote for contracts ahead. A recommendation was also inserted to the effect that both sides should revert to the pre-war practice of conference and stabilisation of rates for longer periods. (1) The advance of 5/- granted under this award was not described as a "war advance". (2)

This advance accrued to the engineering unions, but the brassworkers who were members of the National Society of Brassworkers and Metal Mechanics did not gain this 5/- although the heavy metal-rolling sections of the brass trades obtained the advantage at the same time as the other engineering and foundry unions. (3) The brassworkers had not to wait very long though before they also became entitled in January 1920 to another 5/- per week, this being granted to them by the newly constituted Industrial Court (set up when the Wages (Temporary Regulation) Act and Extension Act had lapsed). (4) Throughout 1919, it will have been noted that little general change had been made in wages by the Interim Court. From this, however, it must not be assumed that the brassworkers had not improved their position. In the first place, it should be recalled that the year 1919 had opened with a strong feeling nationally that the recognized working week should be reduced from the pre-war 54 hours per week to 47 hours per week, and when this

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(1) Award No. 870. Nov. 5th. 1919.

(2) A.G.B.Fisher. Op.cit. p.35.

(3) "Labour Gazette", Dec. 1919.

(4) Award No.112. (Industrial Court) Jan.27th. 1920; see "Labour Gazette", Feb. 1920.

reduction took effect from January 1st. 1919 in the engineering and shipbuilding trades, the brass trades were among those which came within the provision. The reduction in the normal working weekly hours did not affect the weekly basis rates, which stood then at the same level as in 1914, but hourly rates of wages for timeworkers were thereby enhanced. Whereas in the brass trades, overtime had been reckoned after 54 hours had been made (that was as Sir David Dale had left it in his award of 1900), now the time was to be 47 hours.

This reduction in working hours led the way to numerous complaints from pieceworkers in the engineering trades. (1) The provisional memorandum of agreement on the question of hours between the Engineering and Shipbuilding Employers' Federations and the trades unions affiliated to the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation, drawn up on December 24th. 1918, had stipulated that premium bonus earnings should be calculated on the basis of the enhanced day-shift rates, but the next article had laid down that no change should be made in piecework prices or lieu rates.

(2) Pieceworkers were at a serious disadvantage if their piecework prices were not revised upwards, since such prices are

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(1) In the Birmingham brass trades, in those works where the journeyman system was still in vogue, the journeyman had suffered from the reduction in the number of hours which constituted a normal working week, since he had to pay his underhand the same daywork rate for 47 hours as for 54 hours.

(2) Quarterly Journal of Brassworkers' Soc. No.2. January 1919



usually based on the amount of work that an average workman may be expected to do in a certain time. Later, this particular question was settled, for another agreement dated April 1st. 1919 provided that

"where, by reason of the introduction of the 47 hours week, a workman is not able to earn on piecework his previous remuneration on the same job, the employers will undertake to recommend that suitable adjustments shall be made in the piecework prices for that job".

At the same time, agreement was also reached on the principle that piecework prices should be such as would enable a workman of average ability to earn at least  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. above existing time rates (inclusive of war bonuses). Furthermore, in order to overcome the main objection usually raised by the men against "cutting" of piece rates when high earning capacity was assured, it was provided that piecework prices, once established should "not be altered unless the means or method of manufacture" were changed. Thus, adjustments in piece rates could only be made to satisfy these conditions.

The Brassworkers' Society was a party to this agreement,<sup>(1)</sup> but the agreement scarcely affected the brass trades at that time. During the greater part of 1919, it will be remembered that applications for advances made to the Interim Court of Arbitration had not proved successful; it would be wrong, though, to conclude from this that nothing had been gained by the brassworkers during this period, since

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(1) Ibid. No.3. May 1919.

another channel was open to them through direct negotiation with the employers' organisation. The Interim Court had given ample evidence that it did not regard interference in trade union basis rates as within its competence, and the trades unions were not compelled to take every case before the Interim Court. Any attempt to revert to the pre-war practice of direct bargain, either locally or nationally, would have been welcomed by the Interim Court itself. Actually, the brassworkers had adopted this course early in 1919; for they succeeded, through the Conciliation Board, which had been lying dormant for some time, in obtaining enhanced graded basis rates for all workmen over 21 years of age. These were payable from the first week in April 1919, and were then, of course, for a working week of 47 hours. The new minimum rates for dressers and finishers, irrespective of bonuses, were fixed as below:-

Grade.	New Basis Rate.	Advance on 1914 Rates.
Grade C.	34/-	3/-
" D(1).	41/-	6/-
" D(2).	43/-	6/-
" E(1).	46/-	7/-
" E(2).	48/-	7/-

With the addition of the 2s/6 flat rate bonuses and the "Churchill" bonus of 12½ per cent., the "prescribed" district

rates became:- (1)

Rates. April 1919.

	s. d.
Grade C.	70/4
" D(1).	78/2
" D(2).	80/5
" E(1).	83/10
" E(2).	86/-

These, of course, were minimum day work rates; but pieceworkers were not neglected. By virtue of this agreement, piecework prices were to be revised so as to enable a workman of average ability to earn in 47 hours, at least 25 per cent. above the highest day work rate (viz. Grade E.). It was further agreed that pieceworkers under 21 years of age, if engaged on the same work as men over 21 years, should receive the same piecework prices. So, the brassworkers had gained recognition by specific contract for the principle that a pieceworker should be assured of a higher remuneration than a timeworker for the same amount of time worked; and this had been accomplished before the general agreement on the same lines in the engineering trades had been accepted. It will be noticed, however, that the percentage figure was different in the case of the brassworkers from that established in the engineering trade.

At the same time as the graded minimum rates for dressers, finishers and polishers were revised through the Conciliation Board, a new Price List for casters was arranged

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(1) Quarterly Journal Brassworkers Soc. No.3. May 1919. The fixing of these new basis rates in the brass trades accounted for the refusal of the brassfoundry employers to pay the advance of 5/- awarded to the engineering trades in December 1919. See page 232.



on slightly different lines from the previous lists. Casters minimum day work rates were correspondingly increased, the net result of these changes being an average advance to casters of 20 per cent. <sup>(1)</sup>

The new casters' price list differed essentially from the one previously in operation, in that it was based upon a "weight per mould" principle, which was a much fairer method of working. The former list stated a price per hundredweight of castings, irrespective of the number or weight of castings per mould; which meant that a caster working on delicate or lighter patterns was penalised, although his work may have been equally as skilful. Such a caster may have completed as many "heats" in a day and produced as many moulds, and yet would have suffered from lower earnings. The new list remedied this condition of affairs by arranging the prices per hundredweight according to the weight of castings per mould, the lower this weight, the higher the price. For example the prices for plumbers', gas and steam work became:- <sup>(2)</sup>

Weight per mould.	6 to 7 lbs.	17/-	per cwt.
"	7 " 8½lbs.	15/9	" "
"	8½ " 9½lbs.	14/-	" "
"	9½ " 12lbs.	12/6	" "
"	12 " 15lbs.	By arrangement	

Similarly for "fine" castings in cabinet, chandelier, electric work, and false cored work, the prices were fixed at:-

(1) "Labour Gazette", May 1919.

(2) Quarterly Journal Brassworkers' Society. No.3. May 1919.

Weight per mould.	1½ to 2 lbs.	. . . . .	8d. per lb
" " "	2 " 2½ lbs.	. . . . .	.54/- " cwt.
" " "	2½ " 3 lbs.	. . . . .	.45/- " "
" " "	3 " 4 lbs.	. . . . .	.38/- " "
" " "	4lbs. and upwards.	. . . . .	.32/- " "

The weight per mould principle had been applied to "fine" work in the 1911 list.<sup>(1)</sup>

For "common" cabinet castings, prices were:-

From 3½ to 4 lbs. per mould.	. . . . .	22/- per cwt.
All moulds under 3½ lbs. to be paid	<del>as</del> for as 3½ lbs.	
Over 4 to 5 lbs. per mould.	. . . . .	17/- per cwt.
" 5½ to 7 lbs. " "	. . . . .	14/- " "

In the cabinet list, additions were to be made to schedule rates for jobbing work. There were also prices per hundred weight for some articles irrespective of the weight per mould.

The new list was a vast improvement on all previous casting lists, sources of unfairness being largely removed. Soon after the adoption of the list in April 1919, further negotiations for slight alterations became necessary. The changes made were only of a minor character, the main variations being the addition of another price in the plumbers', gas and steam work list. Instead of one price for a weight per mould of 9½ to 12 lbs., two prices were agreed upon, these being:-

Weight per mould 9½ to 10½ lbs.	. . . . .	13/6 per cwt.
" " " 10½ " 12 lbs.	. . . . .	12/6 " "

Since then, the prices have undergone no variation, and the 1919 list is still operative.<sup>(2)</sup> At that time, the piece work caster was entitled to war bonuses amounting to 10 per cent. on the list earnings plus 23/6 in flat rate advances plus 7½ per cent. "Churchill" bonus on total earnings.

(1) See Appendix. B.7.

(2) See Appendix R<sub>c</sub>. for full list as at present in operation.

In any uniform piece work price list, some provision has to be made for "mutuality", and in the casters' lists drawn up for the brass trades, this feature is not absent. In the 1911 list, the words "extra by agreement" were to be found in some cases, and the 1919 list has similar provisions. For example:

- (1) False cored work... extra to fine work, prices by mutual agreement.
- (2) In the cabinet list, where rings, ventilators etc. were too large for ordinary size moulds, or too light to fall within the schedule list of weights, rates were to be fixed by mutual agreement.
- (3) Cored Arms..... <sup>Extra to fine work</sup> ~~by mutual agreement~~ by mutual agreement.
- (4) Waxes and Plasters..... Prices to be arranged by mutual agreement.
- (5) All patterns taking extra size moulds to be paid an extra rate by agreement, or done day-work.

The list of 1919 was a development of the former list arranged in 1911, the refinements leading to fairness for the piecework caster. The clauses with regard to casters' "waste" remained, although this matter had later to become the subject of special agreement at a joint meeting of employers' and casters' representatives in November 1925. In that agreement it was definitely stipulated that no "tooled" castings should be taken back by the caster as waste. Edged work was not to be regarded as "tooled" work. The casters' "allowance", as it is termed, also remains the same at 7lbs. per cwt. This feature has not yet been described, but the reader will probably have guessed what the "allowance" really is. It will be recalled that a certain amount of metal is



originally weighed out of the caster, and this can be relied upon to produce a certain weight of alloy. In the process of founding and pouring, there is bound to be some loss in weight, and this is recognized in the price list. But the loss in weight, as determined when the castings are weighed up in the rough warehouse must not exceed 7lbs. per cwt. of metal. The loss may arise in several ways. If the caster does not extract his molten alloy from the furnace at the correct moment, his metal will burn away up the chimney stack; if he is careless, alloy will be spilt from the crucible in the process of extracting ~~the~~<sup>and</sup> pouring; the "gates" between one casting and another in the mould will also account for some loss.<sup>(1)</sup> There is, furthermore, the remote possibility that a caster or moulder may be tempted to pilfer metal. So, if it happens that the loss in weight exceeds 7lbs. per cwt.,<sup>(2)</sup> an enquiry is held into the matter in the works. An occasional excess may be allowed to pass, but constant bad workmanship or carelessness will result in discharge for the workman concerned. Normally, the caster works with an average loss of about 4lbs., and the most efficient caster can work at less than that figure where the number of castings does not make up a full mould, that is, when it is an "odd mould", the caster is paid an extra sum, at the rate of 4d. per mould and weight for 12 and under. It is only in analysing complex conditions such as these, that

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(1) The skill of the moulder is largely centred in his arrangement of the patterns in the mould so as to avoid waste of metal.

(2) "Allowance" of 9lbs. for "fine" work.

one is able to appreciate the value of collective agreements with regard to working conditions; they certainly make for very desirable uniformity.

Although much care had been expended on the drawing up of the new list in 1919, the list of prices could only be regarded as experimental and provisional, on account of the wider application of the "weight per mould" principle. It is not surprising, therefore, to find complaints from casters in 1920 that their piecework prices were inadequate. Negotiations on their behalf resulted in a further concession to piecework casters in July 1920, whereby, after deduction of the moulder's wages from piece-rate earnings, a sum equivalent to 2½ per cent. should be added to the caster's earnings, before the addition of war bonuses. It was far easier to make an adjustment of this kind than it was to undertake a thorough revision of the prices, although the 2½ per cent. addition made the calculation of casters' earnings a troublesome business.

Coincident with the adoption of the new list in 1919, day-work rates for casters, moulders and getters-down, were increased. Previous to that, the day-work rates were exactly as they had been fixed in 1911. The day-work rates, irrespective of war-bonus, became:-

	New Day-work Rates.	Advance on Pre-war Rates.
	s. d.	s. d.
"Fine" caster. (Cabinet, Chandelier, Electric work, False Cored work)	60/-	7/3
Principal Hand (work other than "fine".)	54/-	8/5
Moulder ("fine" or ordinary work).	42/-	6/-
Getter-down.	35/-	5/-

Flat-rate advances to timeworkers stood, at that time, at 28/6 per week, so that the weekly earnings of day-work casters and assistants after the adoption of the new rates in 1919, became day-work rates plus 28/6 plus 12½ per cent. "Churchill" bonus <sup>on total</sup> earnings.

Their rates compared with other classes of brass-workers were:-

DRESSERS AND FINISHERS, STAMPERS ETC.	POLISHERS.	CASTING-SHOP.
Grade E(1) 83/10.	Grade E(2) 86/-.	Principal Hand (fine) 99/7
" D(1) 78/2.	" D(2) 80/5.	" " "
" C 70/4.	" C 70/4.	(Ordinary) 92/1
		Moulder. 79/4
		Getter-down. 71/6

The labourer in the casting shop was in a more favourable position then, than the lowest grade of dresser or finisher. It will have been noticed also that the number of grades for dressers and finishers had been reduced to three, the A and B grades having been abolished. The change was due to the fact that workers had been up-graded to a very large extent in the war years, and the two lowest grades were found to be unnecessary in view of the smallness in the numbers of



workers appearing in them. There would seem to be no reason to revert to the former number, because a grading scheme is apt to become cumbersome if the numbers of grades is multiplied. The fewer the number of grades, the more successful a grading schedule is likely to be. So, the number of grades has remained at three since 1919, and, as will be seen later, an agreement was reached in February 1926 regarding the young workman entering grade C at the age of 21 years, whereby he was not entitled to the full grade C rate until he had attained the age of 21½ years. During the war, the old percentage bonus (i.e. the 20 per cent. for casters) had been retained, but in the list drawn up in 1919, this had disappeared completely. The prices of the new list were inclusive of any pre-war bonus, as were the new day-work rates. Whatever significance still attached to the pre-war 25 per cent bonus to dressers and finishers also vanished. The percentage bonus around which the struggles had centred in the old days is now a relic of the past, and just a historical curiosity.

The second stage of war and post-war movements might conveniently have been further divided into two separate stages; but as the year 1919 represents a transitional period, the writer has preferred to regard the whole period from February 1917 to April 1921 as one stage in itself. The preceding account will have shown that there had been a close connection between the movements of wages in the engineering trades and those in the brass trades, through joint action with other engineering trades unions. But the first step in the

direction of resuming the pre-war type of negotiations with the Brassfounders' Employers' Association had been made in obtaining the new graded basis rates and in drawing up new day-work rates for casters in 1919. Another indication that movements in the wages of brassworkers would not, sooner or later, follow those in the general engineering trades, was supplied by the unwillingness of the brass-founders to pay the award of 5/- made by the Interim Court of Arbitration in November 1919. Later, the gap had widened still more, for the brassfoundry employers refused to concede the award<sup>(1)</sup> made in March 1920 by the Industrial Court for the joint engineering unions. The four monthly procedure had still been adhered to with the supersession<sup>s</sup> of the Interim Court by the Industrial Court, and in March 1920 advances amounting to 6/- per week for timeworkers and 15 per cent. to pieceworkers had been awarded. This advance had been divided into two equal parts, one to become payable from March 31st. and the other from May 31st. Engineers were entitled to an extra 3/- or 7½ per cent from the first date, and to similar amounts from the second. These advances were to be taken into account in the calculation of overtime or any other allowance dependent on standard time rates. They were also to form part of earnings upon which to add the percentage "Churchill" bonuses. The advances to time workers were to be regarded as additions to the existing time rates, and were thus to be taken into account in the fixation of new piecework prices.

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(1) Award No. 180.

When the Birmingham Brassfounders' Employers' Association refused to pay the extra 6/-, the union referred the matter to the Industrial Court, but this body decided<sup>(1)</sup> that the increases applicable to other engineering trades should not apply to the brass trades of Birmingham and District. The men were highly discontented with this decision, and were advocating drastic action. At a meeting<sup>(2)</sup> of workmen attended by representatives of about 60 or 70 firms in the district it was resolved unanimously,

"that in the event of any employers refusing to consent to pay from the due date (first week in April) the increases given by Award 180, the members of this Society will be unable to work at present prices after Wednesday, April 28th. 1920."<sup>(3)</sup>

This was the first time since 1889 that the men had threatened the complete withdrawal of labour from the factories, and sooner than suffer the inconvenience of a stoppage, some firms paid the demanded increase of wages. Generally, however, the demand was met by a stern refusal from the Employers' Association, with the result that a strike was declared from April 28th., the second (apart from strikes in individual works) in the history of the trade. Between 4000 and 5000 men ceased work, but the stoppage was of brief duration. Three days sufficed for negotiations to yield a satisfactory settlement, the employers' conceding an advance of 4/- per week from May 1st. to both timeworkers and pieceworkers. This strike

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(1) Award 258.

(2) Held April 19th. 1920.

(3) Quarterly Journal. No.7, May 1920.



was in the nature of a "lightning strike", as there existed much uncertainty right up to the last moment. The course of events, moreover, revealed to the Society <sup>certain weaknesses in organisation, some workmen even were</sup> hardly aware that the strike was in progress. The stoppage provided an excellent opportunity as well for laying hands upon non-unionists, for in three weeks, the Society was able to report a recruitment of 500 additional members in the Central Branch. (1)

As this advance of 4/- marked the highest pitch to which wage rates attained in the trade, and at the same time approached the conclusion of the second period we have chosen to outline, it may be as well to tabulate the results of war and post-war movements up to May 1920. We shall then be in a position to embark upon the last stages of our journey. The ensuing particulars refer exclusively to timeworkers, but may be adapted to describe the pieceworkers' conditions by remembering that their initial increments were not make up to 7/- at the date of the first award for the joint engineering unions and that the "Churchill" Bonus was applied at the rate of 7½ per cent, instead of 12½ per cent. The pieceworker actually reached a better position than the timeworker as a result of the agreement in 1919 that his piecework prices should yield to him at least 25 per cent. more than the basis time rates for Grade B. workmen.

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(1) Ibid.

WAR-TIME AND POST-WAR ADVANCES TO ADULT TIMEWORKERS OF  
ALL GRADES (UP TO AND INCLUDING MAY, 1920) IN THE  
BIRMINGHAM BRASS TRADES.

DATE from which payable.	AMOUNT per week.	HOW OBTAINED.
Up to April, 1st. 1917.	s. d. 7. 0.	Three previous advances made up to this figure by Committee on Production April 1917, under Award for joint engineering and foundry trades unions.
April 1, 1917.	5. 0.	Committee on Production. Four monthly review for engineering and foundry trades.
Aug. 1, 1917.	3. 0.	Ditto.
Oct. 12, 1917.	12½ per cent. on total earnings.	"Churchill" bonus under Wages Order of Ministry of Munitions.
Dec. 1, 1917.	5. 0.	Committee on Production. Four monthly review.
Aug. 10, 1918.	3. 6.	Ditto.
Dec. 1, 1918.	5. 0.	Ditto.
<u>FINISHERS &amp;C.</u>		
April, 1919.	s.d.	
Grade C.	3.0	Advance in Basis Time Rates,
" D(1)	6.0	secured by negotiation through
" D(2)	6.0	District Conciliation Board
" E(1)	7.0	with Brassfounders' Employers'
" E(2)	7.0	Association.
<u>CASTERS.</u>		
Principal		
Hand (fine)	7.3	
Principal		
Hand.	8.5	
Moulder.	6.0	
Getter-down.	5.0	
Jan. 27, 1920.	5. 0.	Award No. 112, Industrial Court for Birmingham Brass Trades, after refusal of employers to pay 5/- from Dec. 1, 1919, awarded to engineer ing trades by Award No. 870 of Interim Court of Arbitration.
May 1, 1920.	4. 0.	Secured, after 3 days' strike, by negotiations through District Conciliation Board, with Brass- founders' Employers' Association, following Award 258 of Industrial Court, which did not apply the Engineering Award (No. 180) of March 1920 to the B'ham Brass Trades.

\* N.B. This 12½ per cent. applied to all advances made  
subsequent to October, 1917.

This table shows plainly that arrangements made for this troublesome period had "all the appearances of having been devised to meet an emergency".<sup>(1)</sup> Total flat-rate advances had been made to the extent of 37/6 per week, with the addition of 12½ per cent. on total earnings under the Ministry of Munitions Order. Furthermore, it is evident that, throughout 1920, relations with the changes in engineering wages were becoming less and less close. From a special conference of brassworkers, held in Birmingham in August 28th. 1920, two resolutions were sent up to the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades' Federation for the attention of affiliated unions. These were:<sup>(2)</sup>

- (1) "That in view of the unsatisfactory use made by the Industrial Court of the four monthly hearing agreement, we recommend all Trades Unions signatories to the agreement to give notice to terminate same".
- (2) "That this meeting recommends to the respective Executives that an application be made to the Employers' Federations for an advance of 6d. per hour to all journeymen timeworkers, with an equivalent per centage advance in piecework prices; 3d. per hour advance to apprentices and boys at the trade; also the consolidation of all War advances and Bonuses, to be negotiated during the expiry of the present award."

Thus, feeling was not so much against joint action with other engineering and foundry unions as against the administration of the Industrial Court. Both resolutions were later considered by a Conference<sup>(3)</sup> of affiliated union representatives, at which it was decided to terminate the four-monthly agreement and to press for further advances in wages, as desired by the second resolution.<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Award No. 180. Industrial Court.

(2) Quarterly Jnl. No. 8, Sept. 1920.

(3) Held Sept. 3rd. 1920.

(4) Quarterly Jnl. No. 9  
Dec. 1920.



Cooperation with other engineering unions never went further than joint action as typified in the four monthly agreement and in various joint conferences held for specific purposes from time to time. As early as September 1918, tentative efforts at amalgamation of the engineering unions had been promoted, the Brassworkers Society participating in the preliminary discussions.<sup>(1)</sup> But on both occasions when the proposal to amalgamate was submitted by ballot to the whole Society, insufficient measure of support could be obtained for the project. In 1919, only 36 per cent. of the members voted on the question, there being 5,700 in favour and 4,556 against amalgamation. As the conditions of the ballot were that 50 per cent. of the members should vote to constitute a valid result, the amalgamation did not take place. In the Birmingham district, the men were not favourable to the scheme, the figures being 3,245 against and 1,348 for amalgamation.<sup>(2)</sup> A similar fate befell the second ballot taken in 1920. The condition on this occasion was that a 20 per cent. majority was necessary before amalgamation should take place. The result for the whole Society was:<sup>(3)</sup>

For Amalgamation	10,504
Against "	10,199
Majority in favour.	<u>305.</u>

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(1) Ibid. No.2. Jan. 1919.

(2) Ibid. Sept. These figures cover the branches at Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Coventry, West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Redditch, Lueley and Aston.

(3) Ibid. No.7. May, 1920.

There was a much more representative poll for this ballot, but the majority did not reach the minimum proportion stipulated and no action was taken in the direction of amalgamation. As before, in the Birmingham district, there was a majority hostile to amalgamation. The figures were:

Against	Amalgamation.	7,876
For	"	3,295

In connection with the engineering industry, another ballot had been taken in 1920, not on the subject of amalgamation, but concerning proposed negotiations with employers in regard to Payment by Results. Nine unions held such ballot, and in each case there was a substantial majority against empowering the union officials to conduct negotiations. In this instance, the brassworkers were with the engineering unions in the cognate trades. Thus, although there was a willingness to work in union on certain questions of common concern, the tendency throughout 1920 in regard to wages negotiations was in the direction of a return to separate action with employers in the respective trades. After the abandonment of the four monthly agreement late in 1920, the seal was definitely broken.

In the six years since the opening of hostilities in 1914, trade unions had greatly strengthened and consolidated their position in the industrial sphere. By the end of 1920, brassworkers could point to the tremendous progress that they had made. In the Birmingham neighbourhood, as well as in other centres where strong branches flourished, membership has increased by leaps and bounds. Strenuous efforts had been made to organize the trade thoroughly, so that bargaining strength

was at a maximum. The table given in Appendix<sup>(1)</sup><sub>F</sub> shows the phenomenal advance made in this period, membership having increased by over 100 percent. At the end of 1913, the membership in the Birmingham district stood at 10,101, in seven branches. By the end of 1920, membership had increased to 22,836, and the number of branches was seventeen. the total membership of the Society for the whole country was 12,947 in 1913 and 38,914 in 1920, so that the union was deriving much strength at the later date from outside the West Midland area. Again it is necessary to warn the reader that the 23,000 members in the Birmingham district may not all have been engaged in the brass trades. At Coventry, there was a large following of cycle workers, at Redditch, cycle workers and needle and fish-hook makers, while at Dudley the hearth furniture industry included workers in iron as well as brass. Others of the multifarious small metal-wares trades in the district would also claim a share. New sources had been tapped in branches of the trade which had hitherto tasted sparingly of the influence of trade unionism. About the time of the additions to basic time rates in 1919, meetings of metal spinners had been held, and with enthusiasm it was decided to make application for a minimum day work rate of 1/4 per hour, which together with the flat rate advance at that date amounting to 28/6 and the 12½ per cent. was equivalent to a day work rate of 102/6 for a week of 47 hours.

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(1) See page 658. Appendix F.



Pieceworkers were clamouring for increased prices to yield earnings 50 per cent. above this day work rate. Failure to secure agreement to these rates resulted in the matter being referred to the Interim Court of Arbitration, the terms of reference providing that the proposed rate be paid to spinners who could begin and finish work throughout, work from drawings if necessary, and produce own chucks in wood or iron. At that time, it was shown that 16 out of 25 firms in Birmingham were paying at the rate of 25 or more. Hence, it would appear to have been merely the principle of a minimum rate that was at stake, and the Interim Court awarded in favour of the men,<sup>(1)</sup> so that the new rate became the "prescribed rate" for the district. The metal spinners became quite a strong body in the union after this, and well they might, for they enjoyed the highest time rate in the trade.

Yet another trade to benefit during these favourable years was the hearth furniture trade, centred in Birmingham and Dudley, a trade into which both brass and iron work entered. The lead in this case came from employers who requested the men to cooperate with them in the formation of a Joint Industrial Council. That was early in 1919, and one of the first results achieved after the inception of the Council, was the application to the trade of the 5/- advance of December 1918, and the adoption of the 47 hours' week. Minimum day work rates were instituted, not only for brassworkers, but also for ironmoulders in the trade. Every encouragement was given by

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(1) Award 738. July 30, 1919. Took effect from Sept<sup>st</sup> 1. 1919.

employers to the organisation of labour in the hearth furniture Trade.<sup>(1)</sup>

This period witnessed also the establishment of two Trade Boards, the scope of which brought the brass trades into contact with them. One was the Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making Trade Board, established in December 1919,<sup>(2)</sup> and the other the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board, established in February 1920.<sup>(2)</sup> The former trade was one which had been poorly organised, although the Society was making progress in some of the larger works before the Board was set up. That is why the union felt at first that the Trade Board was being imposed upon them,<sup>(3)</sup> when this trade was scheduled under the Trade Boards Act. Through the medium of the Board, the men's representatives were able to secure the application of the brassfounders' rates and also ~~the~~<sup>to</sup> get the grading scheme accepted. It was further agreed that all awards and bonuses be treated as one flat-rate advance and be merged into the minimum time rates. The other Board came into existence early in 1920. Its scope was very wide, extending beyond the brass trades to numerous other metal-wares trades. The Board was national in character, but a majority of the firms on its list were situated in and around Birmingham. In its second wages Order, the recognized rates for brassworkers were adopted

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(1) Quarterly Jnl. No.3, May 1919.

(2) Order of Minister of Labour, dated October 28th. 1919.

(3) "Considerable difficulty arose with the coffin furniture trade to obtain the brassfounders' rates and we were forced to agree to this section being governed under the Trade Boards Act." - Birmingham Organiser's Report. Quarterly Journal, No.6. Jan. 1920.

for those of the workers covered by such rates, that is, stampers, polishers, and dippers and bronzers. Later, some confusion arose over the proper sphere of operation of the Trade Board, and after repeated conferences between representatives of the Ministry of Labour and the Trade Board, and after two public enquiries, the definition of the scope of the Board underwent some modification.<sup>(1)</sup>

All along the line, then, had the spirit of organisation been breathed into the various branches of the trade, and the union was able to exercise much greater influence than formerly in shops which, perhaps, had not contained a single union man before. The power of the union had undoubtedly been reinforced by the legislative measures of the reconstruction period. Where opposition to the payment of trade union rates was encountered the union could bring pressure to bear on recalcitrant employers through the clauses on the Statute Book relating to the payment of "prescribed rates". By sub-section 3 of section 2 of the Wages (Temporary Regulation) Act 1918, the Minister of Labour could, "on the advice of the interim court of arbitration, by order direct that the determination or variation effected by "an award, agreement or settlement" should "be binding on all workmen to whom the prescribed rate in question is applicable and the employers of these work-people". This was a powerful offensive and defensive weapon, although it was not too clear

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(1) See Chapter 8. for a full account of the working of these two Trade Boards.



whether the terms of the Act could be imparted to cover the additions to basis rates secured in April 1919.<sup>(1)</sup> Both employers and men realised the dangers to which they were exposed if it were open to some employers to refuse payment of the new rates. But any shadow of doubt was removed later in 1919 after application had been made to the Minister of Labour to give definite sanction to the district rates under the Act. Reference to the Interim Court under sub-section 4, section 2 of the Act, whereby the Minister could refer to the Court for advice on any matter arising under the Act, resulted in the Minister's approval of the district rates.<sup>(2)</sup>

The <sup>an</sup>hands of the union had been strengthened all round, and they were usually in a position to enforce their will when disputes occurred. Thus, there was little difficulty in forcing one firm in 1918 to pay the 7½ per cent bonus to pieceworkers, where such had been withheld. In this case, it was discovered that a deduction of 2/- per week was still being made for "mill-power", and this also had to cease.<sup>(3)</sup>

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- (1) Actually, the "prescribed rate" was defined by the Act (Section 4) as follows:- "As respects a man or boy employed in any trade or industry or any branch of a trade or industry in a district, the prescribed rate shall be the recognized time rate or other basis for determining wages (with any allowance for overtime, night-work, week-end or holidays when worked and additional war bonuses or war advances) generally applicable on the eleventh day of November 1918, to that class of workmen in that trade or industry or branch thereof in that district".
- (2) Quarterly Journal. No.5. December 1919.
- (3) Ibid. No.2. January 1919.

After the establishment of the new basis rates in 1919, there were some cases in which dispute arose as to the grading of the men by the union. Intervention on behalf of the men was often found to be necessary, especially where men had been promoted from one grade to another. Strikes occurred at two firms in Wolverhampton where employers would not accept the status applied by the Society.<sup>(1)</sup> A similar difference arose at a Birmingham establishment, where the Society succeeded in getting at least forty men put over to the top grade.<sup>(2)</sup> Every opportunity was taken at this stage to improve the grading of workmen, so that they might earn the highest possible rate. In other cases it would be piece-work prices that came under the review of the union's organisers in order to ensure adequate observance of the condition that a piece-worker should be able to earn at least 25 per cent. above the highest time rate.

Such was the healthy condition of labour organisation as the year 1920 drew to a close. For the three main sections of the trade, gas and electric light fittings, water and steam fittings and cabinet work, the Conciliation Board once again stood out as the recognized machinery for adjusting rival claims. Through the Board, enhanced basis rates had been gained, without any sacrifice of the benefits of the Grading Scheme. In fact, the scheme had been modified slightly to the workman's advantage. Not only had the two lowest grades been abolished, but the requirements in qualifications were made less stringent in some instances when certain revisions were in

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(1) Ibid. No.4. September 1919.  
 (2) Ibid. No.5. December, 1919.

made in December 1920. The following comparisons will show that the substitution of "or" for "and" has made it easier for the brassworkers in the matter of grading.

GRADING SCHEME 1913.

Grade D(1) Dressers,  
who turn, screw inside and out, plug and seat, file flat and square at the vice, and finish their own work throughout.

Grade D(1) Dippers,  
who qualify in the preceding grade, and also do art bronzing and colouring, or electro-plating, or have a knowledge of electro-plating and solutions.

Grade D(1) Burnishers,  
who are expert hook and straight burnishers at the vice, and satisfactorily burnish deep thin shell work at the lathe.

Grade E(1) Dressers,  
who have a complete expert knowledge and experience of all classes of lathe and vice work, or work to blue prints or drawings.

GRADING SCHEME (REVISED 1920)

Grade D(1) Dressers,  
who turn, screw inside and out or plug and seat, or file flat and square at the vice, or braze.

Grade D(1) Dippers,  
who are all round dippers and bronzers, or do art bronzing and colouring, or electro-plating or have a knowledge of electro-plating and solutions.

Grade D(1) Burnishers,  
who are hook or straight burnishers at the vice, or satisfactorily burnish deep thin shell work at the lathe.

Grade E(1) Dressers,  
who have a complete expert knowledge and experience of all classes of lathe or vice work, or work to blue prints or drawings.

General recognition of the new basis rates had been secured largely as a result of legislative measures concerning labour questions in the years of reconstruction following the war. In addition, combined action on various lines of policy with other engineering trades unions had perhaps also contributed to the power then wielded by the Society of Brass and Metal Mechanics.<sup>(1)</sup> In another branch of the metal trades allied to

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(1) The name of the Society was changed from "Brassworkers & Metal Mechanics" to "Brass and Metal Mechanics" in 1919.



the brass trades proper, namely in the hearth furniture trade, organisation had made rapid strides, and in this case, employers had welcomed the development to such an extent that a Joint Industrial Council, set up on their own initiative, was working satisfactorily. Furthermore, the establishment of Trade Boards in two other directions was conducive, in the initial stages at least, to more widespread organisation in hitherto untouched spheres. On all sides, the outlook was hopeful.

(iii)

(2) April 1921 to January 1922.

By the end of 1920, the boom began to show ominous signs of wear and employers could not look forward with unconcern to any rosy prospects of continued trade activity. Neither could the workman hope to hold up their heads with pride and expect to keep all that they had won. The numbers on their unemployment registers began to swell and most sections of the trade experienced a severe falling off in demand. The plumbers' section appeared to be busiest at that time, probably on account of the renewed housebuilding campaign. (1) Just before Christmas in 1920, it will be recalled that the men were concentrating on a movement for an increase of 6d. per hour (2), but all thoughts of this had vanished as trade declined. From many quarters were heard expressions of intention on the part of employers to effect reductions, against which the men were naturally going to make a determined stand. At Willenhall there was a ten days' lock-out among the stump-moulders on the employers' desire to impose new and lower piece-work prices. (3) There was also trouble in the coach and harness furniture trade at Walsall. In some of the non-associated firms in Birmingham certain attacks were being launched on wages and it became obvious that sooner or later the associated employers would likewise press for some relief,

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(1) The prosperity of the plumbing and cabinet sections has always been closely bound up with that of the building industry.

(2) In conjunction with other engineering unions. see p 249.

(3) Quarterly Journal, No. 10. May 1921.

especially as the engineering employers had already moved in that direction by demanding the taking off of the 6s. to timeworkers and 15 per cent to pieceworkers which had been gained by Award 180 of the Industrial Court in March, 1920.

Early in 1921, the Brassfounders' Employers' Association put forward a claim for a reduction of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent and the taking off of the advance of 4s. obtained after the strike. The men showed willingness to negotiate, although they intended guarding their basis rates closely. The demands were left to a special sub-committee composed of representatives of both sides and eventually, when it became evident that a reduction was the inevitable course, a scheme was devised whereby wages would follow fluctuations in the official Ministry of Labour cost of living index number. At the date of the negotiations, (1) the index stood at 151 points above the 1914 level, but it was falling rapidly. Since war advances had been acquired mainly on the grounds of the unprecedented rise in prices, it seemed perfectly equitable to move backwards on the same basis. Relative to 1914, the position of the different grades in February, 1921, was as follows :-

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(1) February, 1921.



## TIME - RATES OF WAGES IN BRASS TRADES.

Percentage Change. 1914 to February, 1921.

GRADE	1914	1921	Flat Rate "Churchill"		Total	Percent-
	Basis Rates.	Basis Rates.	Var Bonus.	Bonus 12½%.	Rates Feb. 1921.	age inc. 1914 - Feb. 1921.
<b>Dressers, Finishers,</b>						
<b>Polishers.</b>						
Grade C	31s. 0d.	34s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	8s. 11d.	80s. 5d.	159.4
Grade D (1)	35s. 0d.	41s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	9s. 10d.	88s. 4d.	152.4
" D (2)	37s. 0d.	43s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	10s. 1d.	90s. 7d.	144.8
" E (1)	39s. 0d.	46s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	10s. 5d.	93s. 11d.	140.8
" E (2)	41s. 0d.	48s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	10s. 8d.	96s. 2d.	134.6
<b>Casters, Moulders, etc.</b>						
<b>Principal Hand (Fine)</b>						
*	52s. 9d.	60s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	12s. 2d.	109s. 8d.	123.7.
<b>Principal Hand</b>						
(Ord.) *	45s. 7d.	54s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	11s. 5d.	102s. 11d.	126.6
Moulder *	36s. 0d.	42s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	9s. 11d.	89s. 5d.	148.4
Getter-down *	30s. 0d.	35s. 0d.	37s. 6d.	9s. 1d.	81s. 7d.	171.9

\* Inclusive of pre-war bonus of 20 per cent.

This table shows that rates of wages for the highest grade workmen had not kept pace with the cost of living (1), and that the lower grades of workmen had received proportionately bigger advances than the high grade men. The absolute amount of war bonus was bound to be greater for the top grade men on account of the 12½ per cent "Churchill" bonus. It must be borne in mind, that the table refers to timewages only and that the majority of men were pieceworkers; so that one cannot gain anything by comparing timewages with movements in cost of living. Neither is one justified in assuming that the "total" rates given in the table represent a true picture of weekly earnings at that date. All that can be inferred from the table are, (1) the relative positions of the different grades of workmen, and (2) the total amount of bonus due to each workman, this being the maximum figure to which the bonus attained. The absolute amount of bonus for each grade may be derived by adding the flat-rate bonus and the "Churchill" bonus.

War Bonus to Timeworkers as at February, 1921.

Dressers, Finishers, etc.

Grade C.	46s.	5d.	per week.
Grade D. (1)	47s.	4d.	" "
Grade E. (1)	47s.	11d.	" "

Polishers.

Grade D. (2)	47s.	7d.	" "
Grade E. (2)	48s.	2d.	" "

Casters, Moulders, etc.

Principal Hand (Fine)	49s.	3d.	" "
Principal Hand (Ord.)	48s.	11d.	" "
Moulder	47s.	5d.	" "
Getter-down	46s.	7d.	" "

(1) This subject is treated elsewhere in these pages.

The bonus ranged, then, from 46s. 5d. to 49s. 8d. but the bulk of the workers would be in receipt of between 47s. and 48s. as bonus. Taking the cost of living index number of February 1921 as the datum point, the sliding scale provided that for workmen of over 21 years of age (1), there should be a reduction or addition corresponding to the variation in the cost of living points, at the rate of 1d. per hour (i.e. 3s. 11d. per week) for each 12½ points, or ½d per hour for each 6½ points fall or rise respectively. These deductions or additions were to be made in relation to total earnings, including government awards and the "Churchill" bonus. It will be seen that even if the index number fell to zero, back to the 1914 level, the new basis rates would still have remained intact, since a fall amounting for the whole 151 points, at the rate of the agreed sliding scale, would have covered approximately a bonus of 47s. to 48s. In fact, it was explicitly stated in the agreement that the negotiations were based on the increased basis rates established in 1919. Neither side had accepted this "Godder basis" with enthusiasm, but it was fashionable at the time and served as a means of getting back to the normal once again. The agreement came into force in the week commencing April 11th, 1921, and subsequent variations were to be made following the publication of the Ministry of Labour figures for the official index number. Any change would then become operative on the pay day in the week following the 20 th of each month. But

(1) Basis rates, it will be remembered, applied to adults only



a limit was placed to the period of the arrangement, such to continue until the end of 1921, when it was presumed that the position would be once again reviewed.

Two months later, an agreement was concluded for the benefit of adults between the ages of 18 and 21. Basis rates were established for such workers and the amount of bonus was regularised at a figure of 24s. The agreed rates which were to operate from the first payday after June 20th, were :-

<u>Youths.</u>	<u>Basis Rate.</u>	<u>Bonus.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
18 years.	18s.	24s.	42s.
19 years.	23s.	24s.	47s.
20 years.	28s.	24s.	52s.

Thus, the bonus was fixed at approximately half that due to men over 21 years of age and a sliding scale similar to that for adults was to regulate any changes in accordance with the cost of living index, the rate being  $\frac{1}{2}$ d per hour for a difference of 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  points and  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per hour for a difference of 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  points, from the datum point of 151, as at the beginning of March, 1921. Both agreements were to run concurrently.

Retail prices fell rapidly, until the end of 1921 and the bonus had been considerably reduced. The course of reductions is depicted in the following table. (1)

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(1) For adult workers. See "Labour Gazette" for index number and dates of change.

**VARIATIONS IN BONUS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COST OF LIVING.**  
**SLIDING SCALE, February 1921 to December, 1921.**

Date.	Index No. Points above 1914.	Increase or decrease.		Increase or decrease.	
		(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)
		Compared with previous month.	Compared with Datum point.	Monthly per week.	Cumulative Total. per week.
1921					
Feb. 20.	151	Datum	-	s. d.	s. d.
Mar. 20.	141 *	- 10	- 10	- 1. 11½	- 1. 11½
April 20	133 *	- 8	- 18	- 1. 11½	- 3. 11.
May 20.	128	- 5	- 23	- 1. 11½	- 5. 10½
June 20.	119	- 9	- 32	- 3. 11.	- 9. 9½
July 20	119	No change	- 32	No change	- 9. 9½
Aug. 20.	122	+ 3	- 29	+ 1. 11½	- 7. 10
Sept. 20	120	- 2	- 31	No change	- 7. 10.
Oct. 20	110	- 10	- 41	- 3. 11.	- 11. 9
Nov. 20.	103	- 7	- 48	- 1. 11½	- 13. 8½
Dec. 20	99	- 4	- 52	- 1. 11½	- 15. 8.

\* N.B. As the agreement was concluded on April 11th, 1921, the April figure of 133 had not then been published. In any case, the March figure showed a decline of 10 points from the datum point and therefore, a reduction of 1s.11½d was due straight away.

The total reduction in bonus for all adult workers had thus been 15s. 8d. per week and the varying amounts of bonus payable to the different grades from December 20th 1921 were as shown below. For January, 1922, the Index No. had registered a further fall to 92 points above 1914, so that a further reduction of 1s. 11½d per week was due from January 20th if the agreement was to be continued after the end of the year.

WAR BONUS AS AT DECEMBER 20th, 1921 and  
as it would have been if the Agreement  
of April, 1921 had continued to operate  
in January, 1922.

GRADE	Bonus as at December 20th, 1921.	Bonus as it would have been if agreement cont'd.
<u>Dressers, Finishers, etc.</u>		
Grade C	30s. 9d.	28s. 9½d.
Grade D. (1)	31s. 8d.	29s. 8½d.
Grade E. (1)	32s. 3d.	30s. 3½d.
<u>Polishers.</u>		
Grade D. (2)	31s. 11d.	29s. 11½d.
Grade E. (2)	32s. 6d.	30s. 6½d.
<u>Casters, Moulders, etc.</u>		
Principal Band (Fine)	34s. 3d.	32s. - ½d.
Principal Band (Ord.)	33s. 3d.	31s. 3½d.
Moulder	31s. 9.	29s. 9½d.
Getter-down	30s. 11d.	28s. 11½d.



(iv) January 1922 to October 1922.

The bonus was still under the influence of the "Churchill" percentage and conditions were just the same as when it was a case of basic rate plus flat rate awards plus 12½ per cent. Hence, when the Conciliation Board was called upon to reconsider the working of the sliding scale at the end of 1921, it turned its attention to the elimination of the influence of the "Churchill" bonus, with a view to making the bonus a uniform figure for all workers. This was accomplished by assuming that the bonus was actually a uniform 47s. in February 1921, <sup>so</sup> that it would have been 29s. 4½d from January 20th 1922 under the terms of the Sliding Scale. The Sliding Scale was still to continue in operation but variations were to apply to the uniform bonus and the agreement was for a period of six months, subject to three months' notice on either <sup>or</sup> side for termination. Thus provision for adjustments had been made for a further period of nine months. Actually, when the arrangement came into operation from January 20th. all except the lowest grades of finishers and dressers and the getters-down in the casting shop suffered a reduction of more than 1s. 11½d, as the bonus due to them would have exceeded the figure of 29s. 4½d according to the new agreement.

We may continue the table given on page 266 to show the variations effected under the Sliding Scale in 1922

Date 1922.	Index Number Points above 1914.	Increase or Decrease		Increase (+) or Decrease (-) in Bonus.	
		(+) Compared with previous month.	(-) Compared with Datum Point.	Monthly. change. per week.	Cumulative. Total from Datum Point.
Jan. 20	92	- 7	- 59	- 1s. 11½d.	- 17s. 7½d.
Feb. 20.	88	- 4	- 63	- 1s. 11½d.	- 19s. 7d.
Mar. 20.	86	- 2	- 65	No change	- 19s. 7d.
Apr. 20.	82	- 4	- 69	- 1s. 11½d.	- 21s. 6½d.
May 20.	81	- 1	- 70	No change	- 21s. 6½d.
June 20.	80	- 1	- 71	No change	- 21s. 6½d.
July 20.	84	+ 4	- 67	+ 1s. 11½d.	- 19s. 7d.
Aug. 20	81	- 3	- 70	- 1s. 11½d.	- 21s. 6½d.
Sept. 20	79	- 2	- 72	No change	- 21s. 6½d.

At the expiration of nine months, then, the bonus stood at 25s. 5½d. for all workmen over 21 years of age but before that time a desire for some other method of adjusting wages had already been expressed. From an employer's viewpoint it was not at all desirable that frequent manipulation of wage rates be made. Movements in the cost of living index number introduced an additional speculative element which tended to make the employer more wary in accepting contracts for future performance. A return to the long period wage contract was necessary. Neither are there any grounds for supposing that the workman should suffer frequent changes in his weekly income according to an index number which may measure changes in retail food prices very adequately but which fails to measure changes in the cost of living as any workman experiences them. Besides, by the time the workman's income is due for adjustment, the prices upon which the index has been based may have shifted again. It certainly seems rather arbitrary to tell a workman that from the 20th day

of the month a reduction of 1s. 11½d. will be made in his weekly wage rate, because the statistical office of a remote government department shows that the cost of maintaining his 1914 standard of living stood one month ago at a certain percentage figure above 1914 compared with the previous monthly calculation at a higher figure still. The working man's wife may be very <sup>hard</sup> pressed to adjust the weekly household expenditure to compensate for the reduction. Thus, it was perhaps a step in the right direction when another agreement was made through the Conciliation Board in September, 1922.

(v) ~~157~~ October 1922 and after.

By the terms of this agreement, there was to be an immediate reduction of 7s. 10d. per week for all timeworkers over 21 years of age and such reduction was to operate until the cost of living reached 51 points above pre-war level. As soon as the cost of living had fallen as low as that, the Sliding Scale was again to be requisitioned for use, and subsequent alterations were to be made at the old monthly rate. This meant, then, that the bonus was to be henceforth 17s. 7½d. per week, that there was no danger of rapid changes in this figure, since at the time of the agreement the index number registered 79 points above 1914, and that the way was still left open for the operation of a Sliding Scale. Youths were similarly treated under this arrangement, their bonus becoming 9s. 4d. per week after a reduction of 3s. 11d. The agreement was for a period of six months, subject to three months' notice on



either side for termination and was to operate from October 9th or 16th, whichever date was more suitable.

Notwithstanding the insertion of provisions designed to make future changes conditional upon movements in the cost of living, (below a certain figure relative to the 1914 level), it was now virtually the case that adjustments in wages in the brass trades were being made according to the conditions of trade. Demand for brassware had fallen away, the trade was unable to bear such high rates of wages, and bargaining between the two sides resulted in a flat-rate reduction of 2d. per hour, or 7s. 10d. per week. Such conditions obtained until the early part of 1924, when trade was showing slight signs of revival and the workmen successfully negotiated for a further advance. By a resolution of the Joint Conciliation Board on April 7th, 1924, it was agreed that an advance of 1d. per hour be paid to men of all grades. The bonus for men became 21s. 6½d. after this change. Youths received under this agreement, an increase of ½d. per hour, making their bonus 11s. 3½d. These increases were to come into effect on the first pay day in May, applying, of course, to work done in the previous week. This agreement, however, contained no reference to cost of living and it could thus be said that there had been at last a break with that method of effecting adjustments. As before, it was a six months' agreement, with notice at three months for termination but since that date it has not been necessary to make any further alterations. In February, 1926,

it was agreed that such rates and conditions of labour should be stabilised for a period of twelve months, with one exception for men who attained the age of 21 after that date. On reaching that age, they were to receive the basis rate of their grade, plus 15s. 6d. as bonus, this latter to be raised to the full 21s. 6½d. on their attaining the age of 21½ years. For six years, weekly rates of wages have remained at the same level. All of the changes referred to have been for timeworkers but pieceworkers have likewise had to suffer reductions. In their case, piecework prices have been re-arranged but always subject to the condition that such prices should yield to the man of average ability, earnings at least 25 per cent above the Grade E daywork rates. There was no upper limit, ~~then~~ though, to a pieceworkers' earning capacity. In addition to this, there is a working rule which stipulates that if C. D. and E. graded men, or D. and E. graded men are engaged in the same factory on the same class of work as each other, piecework prices shall be fixed with regard to the E. Grade man. The reader may wish to comment on the term "average ability" used above, and may feel anxious on behalf of the "sub-normal" worker whose natural abilities do not enable him to earn even the daywork rate. In such cases, on the recommendation of the Brass-founders' Employers' Association, it has become the general practice in the district to pay the daywork rates. Such workers are therefore virtually timeworkers, and the daywork rates are veritably minimum rates.

Present day-work rates in the brass trades are, therefore, inclusive of a uniform bonus of 21s. 6½d. and the pre-war percentage bonus has completely disappeared. It is still thought necessary, though, in pamphlets explanatory of present working conditions to state that "all basis rates for castings are inclusive of the pre-war bonus of 20 per cent, or any other existing pre-war bonus." (1) That the bonus of 21s. 6½d. has not been merged in basis rates would seem to indicate that people are still clinging to the misguided hope that "normal" times will return. Factors other than this, however, account for the retaining of the bonus as a separate item. As far as timeworkers are concerned, there would be no objection to the merging of the bonus; for instance, a Grade E. man has a basis rate of 46s., and with the addition of the bonus, his time rate becomes 67s. 6½d. This figure is equivalent to a basis rate. On the other hand, a pieceworker has a legitimate interest in preserving a separate bonus of 8½d. per hour. It will be recalled that for such a man piecework prices must be such that his weekly earnings for a full week of 47 hours should not fall below 125 per cent of the Grade E daywork basis rate, i.e. 46s. plus 25 per cent of 46s. plus 21s. 6½d. (2)

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(1) e.g. "Grading Scheme and Casters Manual". Before the war, of course, the caster was accustomed to having 20 per cent. added to his piece rate earnings, or to his daywork rate if he were a timeworker.

(2) In Chapter 8 it will be seen that the Trade Boards make no such distinction between a rate and a bonus; the bonus is not thus merged. In the case of the Trade Boards, however, the pieceworker's guaranteed rate is 15 per cent above time rates and not 25 per cent.



Were the bonus to be merged, he could not claim as much as 25 per cent above the time rate if his earnings were to remain at the same level. By maintaining the bonus as a separate entity, quite apart from the piecework prices, there is no danger that the employer will keep the pieceworker<sup>4</sup> waiting about for <sup>his</sup> work, because the bonus at 5½d. per hour will have to be paid for the time that he is kept idle. The pieceworker always feels that he has the bonus to fall back upon when work is not coming along at a satisfactory pace. It is alleged sometimes by employers that when work is scarce, pieceworkers take longer to perform their jobs in order to reap a bigger share of bonus ~~and~~ <sup>but</sup> on the whole, such a practice of "going slow" would not be tolerated for long, and in fact is not commonly resorted to among pieceworkers. Employers themselves would not welcome any suggestion that the bonus be merged into basis rates, because they feel that it is always a much more difficult task to get the men to agree to any change in basis rates. When economic conditions demand it, an attempt to reduce the bonus does not appear to be so dangerous as a reduction in the recognised basis rates. Partly then because people have not yet forgotten that the war was responsible for the abnormally high money wages now prevailing; partly because pieceworkers have a keen interest in the bonus; and partly because the employer has some strategic reason for maintaining the position as it is, the bonus has not been merged into basis rates.

(vi)

(4)

The present situation in the brass trades.

At the present time the brassworking trades of Birmingham are as forward as any in the practice of collective bargaining. The trade union, in its sixty years of existence has had many obstacles to overcome before such a condition has been attained. The greatest triumph was the Grading Scheme of 1910, although the record attaching to piecework price lists for castings is equally meritorious. There can be no disputing the fact that grading has been beneficial, because the skilled and capable hand is able to get his just remuneration. Theoretically, the rule with regard to appeal to a disinterested party in case of dispute still stands, but it has been found in actual practice that questions of this character can best be settled by negotiations in the works where any dispute arises. In fact, very few cases have ever been taken to the Municipal Brass Trades School, which body was prepared to place tools, equipment and materials at the disposal of employers' and workmen's organisations for the purpose of holding any examination or test. The authorities of the school would not be the judges of a man's work, this duty being placed upon the shoulders of a small disinterested committee drawn from both sides. The Brass Trades School has now passed out of existence, owing to lack of support, so that employers and workmen must settle grading disputes in the factories. Once a man has been graded, it is not usual for him to move down a grade subsequently, but there is nothing to prevent his undertaking a class of work below his grade at the rates fixed for

the lower grade. The trade union does not encourage this practice, however. If top grade work is not required, an employer may easily arrange with his employee that he should, rather than be unemployed, accept work on some other class of order, at lower rates. The workman may or may not agree, but if such course is not acceptable to him, the employer can always get a man of the appropriate grade through the union, because there are usually men standing by on the unemployment registers.

Workshop routine has undergone modification gradually as methods of production have changed. But there has been no sudden revolution. The new has been evolved imperceptibly ~~step by step~~, out of the old. The old type of journeyman has become the modern foreman or charge-hand, with still many of the duties of the old days. The foreman still has some voice in the taking on of new hands, and he may even decide the rates of remuneration for those under his charge. But nowadays, the position of the underhand is far more satisfactory; he is entitled to be graded according to his skill and ability, and he may claim his proper rate of wages. There are few foremen of the old type who contract with the management and pay exactly what they choose to their assistants. The official attitude of the trade union is definitely antagonistic to the system, and resolutions have been passed placing restrictions upon it. (1) Although one of these aimed at securing a share cut among the workers of a shop of the "profits" of the foreman, that is, of

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(1) Vide Chapter 2, part (11) p. 54.



the excess of piecework earnings over day-work rates, there is no guarantee that this is done. As the sub-contracting system is now only adopted in a few establishments, the union does not go to very great pains to see that the rule is generally observed. The union is satisfied if a workman is earning his minimum rate. There are still cases in which a skilled pieceworker, whether assisted by a youth or not, settles up monthly with the management. He may "draw" his appropriate graded rate from week to week for three weeks and then strike a balance at the end of the fourth week to see how he stands with regard to his piecework total for the four weeks. The excess over the minimum rate may be great or small, according to the class of work upon which the man has been engaged. It should be pointed out that, although the trade union is responsible for the issue of grading cards, employers do not discriminate against a non-union man. They treat all workmen in the same manner, so that in the eyes of an employer a non-union workman may be a Grade E, Grade D or Grade C man just as any other. For instance, the few remaining members of the Cock Finishers' Trade Society, although they have no collective agreement with employers, are skilled men up to Grade E standard and regard 67/6 as their minimum rate of wages.

Methods of working have changed tremendously within the last twenty or thirty years, but the old brass workers have proved to be adaptable men, and have been able to adopt the newer methods. The brass turner's lathe is now vastly different, and many of the elder brass turners can remember the

various stages of development in lathe construction. But they can adapt themselves to the modern models. In the dressing and fitting sections, the file is now not nearly so important a tool, but there are still many products which require careful treatment with the file such as can only be applied by some of the elder skilled hands. (1) The machine-shop of an up to date brassfoundry impresses one with the fact that in many respects the brass trades have become a separate section of our engineering industry. There <sup>are</sup> several thousand unskilled and semi-skilled machine-tool workers operating capstan and turret lathes, milling, boring and drilling machines, besides the large number of stamp and pressworkers. Not only youths, but also many female operatives are today employed on processes at one time performed by the skilled brassfinisher. If it so happens that a workman is kept on at such low grade work after he has attained the age of 21, the general rule is that he gets paid the Grade C rate. The trade union claims that age should be the governing factor in such cases.

In the casting-shop, plate and machine moulding may have taken the place of the former hand moulding, and this will have occasioned a different method of payment to the workers, since more work can be accomplished in a given time. In such cases, the head caster is entitled to the minimum day-work rate at least, that is 75/6 $\frac{1}{2}$ , but the machine-moulders are not subject to the moulder's rate of 63/6 $\frac{1}{2}$ . The trade union has

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(1) What is known as a "rising hinge" is a good example of this.

made repeated efforts to establish a minimum rate for these workers at a figure near the moulder's rate, but employers will not consent to such a rate. The latter contend that the work is of such an unskilled nature that the machine moulder is not entitled to anything more than a labourer's rate. Against this, the trade union has claimed that the rate of wages should be determined by the commercial value of the castings produced, and not regarded from the point of view of craft. Methods of working in shops where machine moulding has been taken up are so varied that employers will not consent to a basis rate. There is, however, an agreement between the union and the employers' organisation, arrived at in 1928, that no machine moulder of 21 years of age and over should receive less than 50/- per week of 47 hours. It is usually the practice for the management to fix upon a minimum recognized output of moulds per day for a certain rate of wages, a bonus being paid for any moulds in excess of that number. Thus, there is an incentive for the moulders to work quickly. This method of working is often adopted with plate-moulding as well as with machine-moulding. On a payment by result basis of this nature, the men often earn high wages and it is therefore difficult to arouse any interest among them on the question of a basis rate. Machine-moulding has yet to justify itself in the brass trades, and there are still a large number of firms in which the newer methods have not been adopted. Machine-moulding is not a "paying proposition" unless there is a large and continuous output of standardised castings. The quality of the work



sometimes suffers, and some firms have been known to go back to the old method of working, because it had been found that the machine cannot take the place of the skilled and experienced moulder who is able to detect at a glance any defect in the mould which is likely to spoil the quality of the castings. In connection with the process of casting on the old lines, (1) it should be noted that it is only the head piece-work caster who is entitled to the extra  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on list price earnings which was granted in July 1920. The moulder is not entitled to that increment. The method of arriving at the weekly earnings of the caster and moulder is as follows:-

Example from Plumbers' Brassfoundry Section.

9 cwts. at 12/6	£5. 12. 6.
<u>Less Moulder's Rate.</u>	<u>2. 2. 0.</u>
	£3. 10. 6.
<u>Add <math>2\frac{1}{2}</math> per cent.</u>	<u>1. 9.</u>
	£3. 12. 3.
<u>Add Bonus.</u>	<u>1. 1. 6<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>
Caster's weekly earnings.	= £4. 13. 0 $\frac{1}{2}$
Moulder's " " =	£3. 2. 0 + £1. 1. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$
	= <u>£3. 3. 6<math>\frac{1}{2}</math></u>

Females are still employed as core makers, but it is not usual for the caster to pay them out of his piecework earnings as in

(1) Generally referred to as "tub-casting", although the "tub" is used in plate-moulding also. The "tub" is the place where the moulding sand is kept in the shop. There is another type of moulding known as "stump-moulding", common in some parts of the Black Country, where the moulder works in a kind of pit with the sand around him.

the old days. Coremakers may work on a piecework basis as well, and in some firms the caster and the firm may both contribute to their earnings. But in quite a number of cases coremakers work on a day-work basis and are engaged and paid by the management. There seems to be no difficulty at present in getting a sufficient supply of girls for the trade. It used to be the custom that method of entry into this trade was through some relative who was engaged in it, and girls would learn the work under the supervision of that relative. But such a practice has been dying out for years, and it is more usual for girls to be engaged on day work by the firms. They may move out of one establishment into another when they have become proficient hands. The work done by them is usually for water and steam fittings, although in some types of gas work, cores are also needed. Coremaking is not a highly skilled occupation. It consists of pressing moist sand into an iron corestock, in two halves. A wire is inserted along the centre as a support and both halves are brought together to form the core. The cores have to be dried in an oven before they are ready for placing in the moulds.

The biggest influx of females in recent years has been in the machine-shops, for machine-tool work and stamp and presswork, because females have always made cores and done the lacquering. Girls are also found in the plating shops, where they are engaged in attaching the wire to products before immersion in the plating vat, and in scouring the wares prior to plating. So, the proportion of female labour has increased in

the brass trades. There are no figures to show the relative proportions of males and females at the present time, the latest available statistics being those in the 1921 census reports. (1) In the finishing sections of the brass trades in Birmingham and District, the respective proportions among all persons engaged in the industry were:- males 62 percent., females 38 per cent. There were no separate "industries" and "occupations" classifications in censuses previous to that of 1921, and the "occupations" returns of the previous censuses do not enable us to extract separate figures for what we have styled in these pages the finishing sections of the brass trades. No reliable comparisons can therefore be made with previous decennial censuses. As far as the writer has been able to draw upon the census returns, he has compiled the following table relating to the brass and copper trades as a whole in the three counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

PROPORTIONS OF MALES AND FEMALES ENGAGED IN BRASS

AND COPPER TRADES.

Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

Year	Males.	Females.
	per cent. of total.	per cent. of total.
1901	81	19
1911	74	26
1921	72	28

(1) Vide Chapter 9 p. for industries classification of the 1921 Census, as it dealt with the brass trades.



The writer rather suspects that the figure of 19 per cent. for females in 1901 is too low, and he is led to think this from other available returns made by the Factory Inspection Department of the Home Office in 1896, referring to the year 1895. (1)

These returns were for "factories" only, and related to Brassfounding and Brassfinishing. The percentages for males and females in these returns for the three counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire were 74% and 26% respectively, which figures are identical with those obtained from the census returns of 1911. These factory records are not reliable indicators for two reasons:-

- (1) Many "factories" had escaped notice for the purpose of compiling the statistics. This was admitted in later reports.
- (2) The "industries" classification adopted is not quite applicable in the circumstances in which we are now using the figures.

The figures given in the above table, if it be considered that the record for 1901 may be inaccurate, do not reveal any startling change in the relative positions at the different dates. (2)

It is a pity that we cannot eliminate from these figures the influence of the "heavier" primary branches of the brass trades, for then the position would look different. In the primary branch, a section of the trade which is not<sup>w</sup> of

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(1) Vide Tables given as appendices to Report of Chief Inspector of Factories for 1896.

(2) The proportions for workers covered under the Earnings and Hours Enquiry of 1906 were:

males.	73 per cent.
Females.	27

relatively greater importance, there are fewer opportunities for the employment of women, and this fact would tend to make the 1921 figures an under-estimate of the extent to which females have found their way into the finishing sections. The figures given on page 82 for the finishing sections support this view.

In so far as we are able to make comparisons between the different census returns, our statistics tell us something else. The writer is fully aware of the liability to error in the drawing of comparisons between census and census in connection with industries and occupations, but the following figures may be taken as revelations of certain tendencies in the brass trades. The first table compares the total number of persons engaged in the industry at the two dates 1911 and 1921, distinguishing between the figures for England and Wales, and those for Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

(1) NUMBER OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN BRASS AND COPPER TRADES.

1911 and 1921.

	1911.	1921.	Increase (+) or Decrease (-) per cent.
England and Wales.	65280	63906	- 2.2
Staffordshire, Warwick- shire & Worcestershire.	31493	40116	+ 27.1
Rest of England & Wales.	33787	23790	- 29.6

The second table shows what proportion of all the persons engaged in the industry in England and Wales were resident in the three counties at the two dates, and it distinguishes between the sexes.

(2) PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE BRASS AND COPPER TRADES WHO WERE RESIDENT IN STAFFORDSHIRE, WARWICKSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE. 1911 and 1921.

	1911.	1921.
Males.	43.2	49.3
Females.	72.7	78.6
All persons.	48.2	62.5

The third table is an extension of the first. It deals with the same subject of increase or decrease in persons engaged in the industry, but it distinguishes between males and females.

(3)

Location.	Males.			Females.		
	Increase (+) or Decrease (-) per cent.			Increase (+) or Decrease (-) per cent.		
	1911	1921		1911	1921	
England and Wales.	54032	49396	-8.8	11248	14510	+ 29.0
Staffordshire, Warwickshire & Worcestershire.	23319	28716	+23.2	8174	11400	+39.1
Rest of England & Wales.	30713	20680	-32.6	3074	3110	+ 1.2

The conclusions to be drawn from these tables are:-

- (a) While the brass trades have always been concentrated in the West Midland region (for if we had figures for years previous to 1911, the same fact would be revealed), this concentration has been accentuated in recent years. (1)

- (1) Two possible qualifications should be added. (a) The figures for Scotland are not included (b) The year 1921 followed closely upon the war when the industries of the Birmingham district were still subject to the influences of war-time movements. (munitions, etc.)



(b) While the numbers of males and females increased in the ten years from 1911 to 1921, in the West Midland region, the female workers increased at a faster rate than the male workers.<sup>(1)</sup>

(c) The bulk (over three quarters) of the female labour in the industry are employed in the West Midland region.

It is a pity that we have no later record than that for 1921, but it is not likely that any of these conclusions would be greatly upset by more recent figures. There exists some sort of statistical measurement, then, of movements which may be observed to have taken place in the trade. There is definitely a big army of females engaged in the Birmingham brass trades; but whereas the men are fairly strongly organised in the Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society, there is little or no organisation among the female hands. During the war, the general workers' unions gained many women members from the brass trades, but since 1920, they have lost much ground, and probably only 1 or 2 per cent. of such workers remain trade unionists at the present time. In consequence of this lack of organisation, there are no collective agreements providing for wages, hours or any other working conditions. Such a condition of affairs contrasts strikingly with the progress made for women workers in the smaller metallic bedsteads and lock trades,<sup>(2)</sup> where comprehensive agreements have been negotiated on behalf of women workers.

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(1) Subject to qualification (b) given in previous footnote.

(2) Vide Chapters 10 and 11.

The Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society has also suffered a diminution in membership since the palmy days of 1920. This is inevitable with changing methods of production in times when trade is not so buoyant. It cannot be said that the brass trades have suffered from depressed trade to the same extent as some of the other trades of the Birmingham District, on account of the increased demands from such trades as the motor trades and of the housebuilding campaign of post-war years. But general depression has left its effect on trade union membership. The development of such national schemes of social insurance as health and unemployment insurance is another factor that may have an influence with the workers, because some may say that they need make no provision for such contingencies through their trade union if the State assumes responsibility for insurance facilities. There may be a divided opinion on this subject, since trade unions have been called upon to enter more thoroughly into insurance questions on behalf of their members with the development of the State insurances. Trades unions have been quite anxious to undertake the distribution of State unemployment benefit in many instances. There is just one other possible cause of this falling interest in the union, - that is, the extension of piecework operation. Piecework does open the door to higher earnings, and when a worker is receiving "good money", on a payment by result basis, he feels perfectly satisfied with his lot and often feels no immediate need for the trade union. He is apt to forget that it is the trade union

which has paved the way for the satisfactory piecework price described in the paragraph by which he works.

Conciliation machinery now works very smoothly, in the brass trades, relations between masters and men are amicable and disputes rarely assume serious proportions. Such disputes as do arise are usually settled satisfactorily by direct negotiations with the heads of the firm in whose establishment the dispute has occurred. In holding out for any particular object, however, a workman cannot afford to be so independent today as he could in the war period and the year or two immediately following. Employers may threaten to get the work done in a different way or to get it done by smaller specialist firms. For example, hot stampings have taken the place of cast parts of certain articles, and these are frequently purchases from an outside firm specialising in stampings. It is matter of indifference sometimes to the employer whether a casting or a stamping is utilised, and the labour cost is likely to decide the issue one way or the other. Other instances of this could also be given. For big disputes and general bargaining the Conciliation Board is the channel of negotiation. Agreement is not reached by voting; decisions are reached by mutual consent. Contentious matters affecting the interests of the trade in general are discussed at a small joint meeting of employers' and workmen's representatives, and argument continues until a settlement emerges. This method of negotiation, backed as it is with a tradition of conciliation in the trade, can certainly claim, in the light of the conditions



described in the preceding pages to have met with unqualified success.

## CHAPTER 3.

### Trade Boards and the Brass Trades.

- (1) Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board.
- (11) Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making Trade Board.
- (111) Observations.

## CHAPTER 6.

### TRADE BOARDS AND THE BRASS TRADES.

#### (1) Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board.

Nothing better illustrates the complicated structure of the small metal wares producing trades than the experiences of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board, established early in 1920 <sup>(1)</sup>. Although the jurisdiction of this Board has not been confined to brassworking trades, its relationship to the brass trades has been sufficiently close to justify the inclusion in these pages of some account of its working.

The Board was set up during the period when everyone was suffering from reconstruction fever, when the recommendations of the Whitley Committee had left a deep impression upon the minds of those who paid attention to industrial problems, and also when excessive business activity had for the time being made employers careless as to the ultimate consequences of current official policy. Just as the idea of conciliation was in the atmosphere round about the year 1896, so may it be said that the ideas of Trade Boards and Joint Industrial Councils were being breathed in unconsciously throughout 1919 and 1920. The Trade Boards Act of 1918 had greatly increased the field in which Trade Boards could operate, the deciding criterion for the establishment of any

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(1) Order of Minister of Labour dated October 28th, 1919.  
Board established February 1920.



Board being the state of organisation persisting in any trade. If the Minister of Labour was satisfied that there was inadequate machinery for the effective regulation of wages throughout a trade, he could proceed, after the necessary preliminaries with regard to notice, to the setting up of a Trade Board. A busy time for the ministerial department followed this piece of legislation, and as enquiries continued to reveal deficiencies in wage-adjusting machinery in many trades, so Trade Boards grew in number. The Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares trade was one of the trades for which the Minister exercised the authority which the Act had vested in him.

Now, the first question that anyone having a knowledge of the Birmingham metal trades would ask is: "Of what manner of trade was the Minister thinking when this Board was established? Was his department fully aware of the ramifications of the trade in question?" Another question one is tempted to ask, especially after reading the list of occupations to be covered by the Board, is: "Was there not already sufficient provision, through voluntary agreements, for such work-people, rendering a Board an unnecessary and superfluous institution?" The only answer to the first of these questions is the definition which was attached to the trade for the purposes of the Board <sup>(1)</sup>, and we can only estimate how far the Ministry's judgement was correct from the subsequent history of the Board itself, particularly

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(1) See Appendix D.1. for definition.

those chapters in its history relating to the many parleys with the department on the subject of scope and definition. The question regarding organisation is capable of more than one answer, and while it may be true to say that the skilled male workers were catered for under the collective agreements obtaining in the finishing branches of the brass trades, and that voluntary agreements for female workers would replace the war-time government orders and awards, there is no doubt that the outlook for women workers was far from being well defined.

On the whole, the women workers were poorly organised, and vast numbers of them had found their way into the metal trades during the war years, so that the Ministry was perfectly justified in concluding that there was not adequate machinery for adjusting wages "throughout the trade". In any case, no objections were raised to the Minister's notice of proposal to make an Order for the establishment of the Board, and employers' and workmens' organisations had representatives on the Board. These endeavoured to function under the terms of the Act and of the Order. Some employers welcomed the establishment of the Board, because they saw in it a means of compelling the smaller firm, which usually did not belong to an employers' organisation, to pay a recognised minimum rate of wages. Both sides carried out their obligations and cooperated in fulfilling the duties falling to the lot of the Board. There was much discussion over the fixing of their first minimum time rate for certain women workers, as there was quite an appreciable gap between the

employers' proposal and that of the workers' representatives. Finally, the appointed members intervened to get the rate fixed. The employers based their claim on the figure contained under a voluntary agreement in one branch of the trade, and the other side had in mind the rates fixed under the government's way<sup>f</sup> and immediate post-war measures. So, the appointed members exerted their influence to get a rate fixed between the two extremes, their suggested figure being identical with that which had already been determined for a similar class of work by the Coffin Furniture and Cereament Making Trade Board (1). Subsequently, when more experience of the working of the Board had been gained, both sides were able to agree in the fixing of rates without the intervention of the appointed members. This would seem to indicate that there was no fundamental objection on principle, that both sides were prepared to accept the new Board, and that it only required the passing of a little time in order that good relations between both sides should develop.

The Board was national in scope, and as such, covered workers in districts other than Birmingham and the Black Country. But actually, the majority of the firms coming within the scope of the Board have been located in our district, the figures for 1921 being given as about 450 firms in Birmingham alone out of a total of 842 (2). Since that date,

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(1) Minutes of Evidence. Committee on Working of the Trade Boards Act, 1921. (Hereafter called Cave Committee).

(2) Ibid. 19th Day, p.652.



the number of firms on the Trade Board list has declined, largely as a result of an amended definition given in 1924. At present there are altogether about 430 firms, of which approximately 75 per cent fall within the Birmingham and Black Country area (1). Thus, although the trade, as defined in the Order of 1924 is not confined to <sup>any</sup> one district, one is almost bound in describing the work of and the difficulties encountered by the Board, to be referring largely to <sup>is</sup> ~~that~~ district only. Unfortunately, there are no statistics to show the number of workers covered by the operation of the Board, so that one cannot judge the real importance of this wage-fixing authority. The majority of workers are female; engaged not only in the processes of stamping and pressing, but also in the complementary processes of polishing, japanning, lacquering, brazing and soldering, as well as in such warehouse work as wrapping, packing, despatching, etc. There are no figures to show the proportion of male workers to females under this Board, although the writer has gained a rough estimate of about 1 to 7 up to 1 to 10 from an inspection department official.

Although it is true to state that in recent years there has been a vast increase of female labour on stamping and pressing work, it must not be taken that these operations are comparative innovations. In the early 16th century, in button manufacture, the blanks were cut out in this way, presses also being used for impressing the pattern or device on the

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(1) Figures supplied by Secretary for Trade Boards.

button. Several inventions in the 18th and early 19th centuries aided the development of these processes, such as the "fly-press" for making certain parts of locks, presses and stamps for shaping ~~the~~<sup>and</sup> piercing the eyes of needles, and the presses used in the manufacture of steel-pens when hand-made pens were superseded after about 1830. Ever since, there has been a gradual increase in the number of articles or parts of articles produced on stamps and presses. Articles previously cast have been replaced by stamped or pressed products, and this replacement is still proceeding at a rapid pace. It is work that has proved eminently suitable for female hands to perform, owing to the quickness and dexterity with which they could handle the small metal objects. Thus, the steel pen trade stood out in the middle of the last century, amid a host of small-scale metal wares trades, as a factory industry, with spacious shops accommodating long rows of women and girls operating hand-presses under the supervision of a male tool-maker and tool-setter. Similarly, in the button trade and in several small metal wares trades, light presses were operated by females. Women were also to be found working at the heavier kick-stamps, although such work could scarcely be regarded as a woman's occupation where the weight of the drop stamp placed an undue strain on a woman's physical capacities.

It was not until the 'eighties and 'nineties of last century that the caster in the brassfoundry trades really began to feel the competitive influences of the processes of stamping and pressing, and from then onwards, more and more

work has been taken out of the hands of the sand-caster. Even before the 'eighties the stamp and press had been introduced into the trade, particularly in the manufacture of lamp-burners where division of labour and rapid production (1) were distinctive features and where female labour was being extensively utilised. Most of the stamping in those days was done by manual labour, steam-power having been introduced only in the manufacture of tea-tray blanks, dish-covers, tinplate wares, large copper goods and large articles to be electro-plated; certainly not in the manufacture of small wares for which lighter hand-presses were in use (2). Stamped brass-foundry was not of such great importance, but it was developing to such an extent that a separate trade of stamping was springing up. The tendency for small firms engaged on a specialist process to exist side by side with the more integrated concern had already shown itself in the establishments of out-casters, out-polishers or burnishers, out-engravers and so on, where work was "for the trade". Similarly there had grown up two classes of stampers, "stampers in the rough" and "stampers for hire". The former class supplied stampings to manufacturers of cabinet brassfoundry, gasfittings etc., who did not possess dies of their own, but who supplied the stamper with the metal. The other class merely possessed the necessary stamp or stamps, but no dies; he took both metal

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(1) W.C.Aitken, *Op.cit.* p.340.

(2) *Ibid.* p.307



and dies from his clients (1).

This tendency towards specialisation has persisted to this day. The investigator will find the names of about 200 firms described as stampers or stampers and piercers (2) in the Directory for Birmingham. These firms exist and carry on stamping and pressing quite apart from the large amount of stamping done in the brassfoundries and other works. Stamping and pressing had become quite substantial parts of the brass trades by 1914, and large numbers of females were then employed at press-work. The earnings of such press-workers were slightly in excess of the wages commanded by women generally in the district (3). At that time, the power-press had not superseded the hand-press to a very large extent. The processes have so developed that at the present time press-workers and stampers form quite an appreciable proportion of the female labour force in the metal trades of the Birmingham district. In 1921, there were about 15,000 female press-workers and stampers in the Birmingham district, and of these about 2,400 were attached to the brass and copper trades, the remainder being distributed over a large number of other metal trades (4). In Birmingham alone, 32 per cent of the

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(1) Ibid. p.303.

(2) Inclusive of Stampers and Piercers to the jewellery trade. This figure also includes stampers of ferrous as well as of non-ferrous metals.

(3) R.S.Smirke. Op.cit.

(4) Census Reports, 1921. The occupational class is strictly "Pressworkers and Stampers (not Hot or Hydraulic); Drawers (not Wire or Tube)". The drawers would only form a small proportion of the whole. For the 1921 Census definition of "Birmingham and District" see p. 657 For the trades taken out of Census "Industries" classification to mean "Brass and Copper Trades" see p. 379. The correct figures were: Total No: of female pressworkers & stampers in B'ham & District 15,026. Footnote continued on next page.

female metal workers were returned as pressworkers <sup>(1)</sup>. Thus although the definition of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board is not wide enough to cover the whole of this vast army of pressworkers, it is obvious that the Board is bound to assume a prominent place in the regulation of labour conditions in the metal-working trades of the Birmingham district.

Actually, the Trade Board does not stop at fixing minimum rates of wages for females operating stamps and presses. Both males and females, engaged in several other occupations complementary to or incidental to presswork in the production of metal smallwares, are brought within its scope. The Board is one of those which has considered it to be its duty and within its power to fix rates of wages for skilled as well as for unskilled workers. For male workers employed in the manufacture of any article considered to be within the scope of the Board, there are minimum rates for braziers, burnishers, drop-stampers, dippers who are also bronzers, annealers and brass polishers. For female workers, minimum rates are fixed for polishers, drop-stampers, hand-brush lacquerers, hand-brush japanners, blow-pipe braziers, solderers, and dippers. In addition, the Board has to cater for the unskilled labour of warehouse hands, packers, carriers and others.

In its first wages Order <sup>(2)</sup> ~~(1)~~, operative from

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of which employed in Brass and Copper trades.. 2,377.

(2) ~~(1)~~ Order Q (2).

(1) Census 1921. County Report for Warwickshire.

September 11th, 1920, the Board did not attempt to fix any minimum rates for such special workers, but contented itself with fixing general minimum time rates for males and females according to age, irrespective of occupation or qualifications. It also fixed piece-work bases rates for females, these being 1d. per hour above the general minimum time rates applicable at each age. In subsequent wages Orders, the Board proceeded to elaborate its scales of wages, and in the second list of rates (1), which became effective from December 31st, 1920, adult males (i.e., those over 21 years of age) in the occupational categories enumerated above were graded on similar lines to workers under the Grading Scheme of the Brass and Metal Mechanics Society. There were three grades (2) for braziers, burnishers, drop-stampers and dippers who were also bronzers, the three graded minimum time rates being the same for each of these occupational classes. The brass polishers also had three grades, and as with the trade union Grading Scheme, the rates for Grades II and III were  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour higher than the corresponding rates for other workers. For annealers, there was only one rate, equal to the Grade I rate of others. There was also a Grade I rate only for dippers who were not also bronzers, but these workers were not entitled to this rate until they had completed 12 months employment after reaching the age of 21 years (3). It is

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(1) Order Q. (5)

(2) Designated I, II and III, and not C. D. and E.

(3) This distinction was subsequently removed, so that dippers were placed on a level with annealers as soon as they reached the age of 21 years.



obvious, then, that the trade union Grading Scheme had been copied, and the rates fixed by this second Order approximated to those in operation at the time for brassworkers under the Grading Scheme. There was, however, a difference in the method of presenting the rates. The Trade Board definitely merged the war bonuses in the rates, and stated them as rates per hour, having in its first Order declared the normal number of hours to be 47 per week. But it will be recalled that the brassworkers' rates were made up of three elements at that time; basis rates, flat-rate advances and the 12½ per cent "Churchill" bonus. The following table brings the two sets of rates into comparison, as they stood at December 31st, 1920, on the coming into force of the first Trade Board graded rates.

<u>BRASSWORKERS'</u> <u>TRADE UNION RATES.</u>					<u>TRADE BOARD RATES.</u>		
Grade.	Basis Rate.	Flat Rate Bonus.	12½%	Total Rate.	Grade.	Rate per Hour.	Rate per Week.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.		s. d.	s. d.
C.	31/-	37/6	8/11	80/5	I	1/8½	80/3½
D (1)	35/-	37/6	9/10	88/4	II	1/10½	88/1½
D (2)					II		
Polishers. }	37/-	37/6	10/1	90/7	Polishers. }	1/11	90/1
E (1)	39/-	37/6	10/5	93/11	III	2/-	94/-
E (2)					III		
Polishers. }	41/-	37/6	10/8	96/2	Polishers. }	2/-½	95/11½

It will be seen, then, that the Trade Board took hourly rates to the nearest half penny, which would, on the basis of a 47 hours' week, bring <sup>the</sup> weekly rates to approximately the same figures as those under the trade union agreements plus war bonuses.

The various grades for the several occupations were defined according to the qualifications required. The definitions adopted were very similar to the Grading Scheme requirements, except perhaps in the case of dippers and bronzers in the second grade where one word carried with it a change of some importance, (1). The wording in the brass-workers' scheme is: "Dippers, who are also all round dippers and bronzers, or do art bronzing and colouring, or electro-plating, or have a knowledge of electro-plating and solutions". For the corresponding grade in the Trade Board schedule, the wording is: "Dipper, who is an all round dipper and bronzer, and also does art bronzing and colouring, or electro-plating, or has a knowledge of electro-plating". The substitution of the word "and" for "or" makes a vital difference to the qualifications required. Later on, in 1923, some modifications were introduced in the Trade Board qualifications which were to make grading still less favourable to the workman than under the trade union scheme. Instead of the words indicating that a workman who is capable of undertaking certain classes of work should be guaranteed a certain minimum time rate, there was substituted the words "who is employed on" certain classes of work. For purposes of grading and the payment of minimum rates, there is a difference, particularly for the employer, between these two methods of stating for what service a

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(1) For full text of Trade Board grading qualifications, see Appendix C.2.

minimum rate is intended. An employer will not be prepared to pay for low class work a rate which is fixed for a worker who is qualified to perform a better class of work, but who, at any moment, may be called upon, owing to trade conditions or other unforeseen circumstances, to do the lower class of work. That is the importance attaching to the words "employed on" included now in the Trade Board qualifications. They apply in the case of drop-stampers, dippers and bronzers, and polishers in the second grade. If, however, a workman is employed on work of more than one grade, he is entitled to the rate applicable to the higher grade in respect of all the work upon which he is employed.

Besides these minimum time rates for adult males in the graded occupations, the Board has also fixed a general minimum time rate for all other adult male workers coming within the scope of the Board. Naturally, this is a much lower rate than that for graded workers, and is at the present time 12/6 less than the Grade I rate (1). General minimum time rates for males under 21 years of age are based on an age qualification only, there being seven hourly rates, commencing at 3d per hour for the age group "under 15 years of age", and rising to 9d. per hour (35/3 per week) for "20 and under 21 years of age". Thus, the Trade Board rates go beyond the provisions of the trade union agreements for such

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(1) The present rate for such workers is 11d. per hour, 43/1 per week).



rates, because those agreements only apply to youths from 18 to 21 years of age. The Trade Board rates, however, are lower than those agreed upon between the Brassfounders' Employers' Association and the Brass and Metal Mechanics Society (1). As far as male workers are concerned, then, this Trade Board has not, on account of the nature of the trade, been able to fix one general minimum time rate. Its list of rates is fairly elaborate, the many minimum time rates fixed being arranged according to age, experience in the trade, occupation and skill.

The scale of rates is no less elaborate for female workers, who, as has already been pointed out, constitute the bulk of the workers covered by the Board. In the case of females there are also, as far as women's work goes, what may be regarded as skilled as well as unskilled rates, although no grading according to ability of the worker or quality of the work done has been attempted. There are three main sections (2) in the list of minimum rates arranged by the Board, these being:

- (1) Females employed as polishers or drop-stampers.
- (2) Females employed in any of the following occupations:-
  - (1) Hand-brush japanner, capable of finishing all classes of work (3).
  - (11) Hand-brush lacquerer, capable of finishing all classes of work.

- (1) See Appendix D.5. for present scale of rates.
- (2) This division into sections (1), (2) and (3) is made here for the writer's purpose of description.
- (3) The words "capable of finishing all classes of work" may be regarded as equivalent to a grading definition.

(iii) Blow-pipe brazier, using hard solder.

(iv) Solderer using handiron or blow-pipe with bar, strip or wire solder.

(v) Dippers, engaged in wholly or partially dipping articles in aqua fortis, hydrochloric acid, or sulphuric acid<sup>(1)</sup>.

(3) All other females not included in above sections.

In each of these three sections, rates are graduated according to an age scale, and as between one section and another, rates in Section (1) are higher than those in Section (2), and similarly rates in Section (2) are higher than those in Section (3). There is no distinction between the amount fixed for polishers and that for stampers. In the same way, all occupations in Section (2) are on a level. The adult age in the case of female workers is regarded as 18 years. Rates for adults under Section (1) and (2) are to some extent made dependent upon experience in the trade. Although the rate rises when the age of 18 is reached, the maximum rate is not payable until the first twelve months of employment have been completed after the age of 18. If a female worker enters the trade for the first time at or over the age of 18, the minimum rate applicable for the first two months of employment is identical with that for girls from 17 to 18 years of age. It would appear, then, that age, rather than ability or experience, is the deciding factor in determining the minimum rates for females, since it certainly takes longer than two months to learn work in this trade<sup>(2)</sup>.

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(1) The "dippers" were not added to the list in Section (2) until an Order dated December 26th, 1926, effective from January 3rd, 1927. Order Q. (34)

(2) Four years experience as a pressworker is really required before a worker can be considered to be thoroughly proficient.

The present minimum time rates for adult females are:-

<u>Age and experience qualification.</u>	<u>WORKERS COVERED BY OCCUPATIONS GIVEN IN</u>					
	<u>Section (1)</u>		<u>Section (2)</u>		<u>Section (3)</u>	
	Per Hour. d.	Per Week. s. d.	Per Hour. d.	Per Week. s. d.	Per Hour. d.	Per Week. s. d.
During first 12 months of employment after the age of 18 years.	8	31/4	7	27/5	-	-
After the completion of 12 months after the age of 18 years.	9	34/4	8	31/4	-	-
18 years of age and over.	-	-	-	-	6½	25/5½

Thus, age and occupation are the principal standards by which minimum rates for females are fixed.

So far, we have only examined the manner in which time-rates are arranged for the different classes of workers. In the stamped or pressed metal wares trade, however, the piece-work basis rate is of far greater practical importance, in view of the preponderance of piece-work operation. The Board has never attempted to fix general minimum piece-rates - that is, actual piece-work prices. The tremendous range of articles in the manufacture of which workers come within the compass of the Board's jurisdiction, as well as the huge variety of designs, has rendered such a practice impossible. But the Trade Board Act, through the device of the piece-work basis rate has legislated for the protection of the piece-worker in this respect. At the expense of wearying the



the reader who is fully aware of the details of Trade Board administration, it may be stated that, where piece-work basis rates are fixed, piece-work prices in any factory on the work concerned must yield to the "ordinary" worker at least as much as the piece-work basis rate, the "ordinary" worker being neither the fastest nor the slowest, but a worker of average skill and ability. In conformity with the generally accepted principle that a piece-worker's earnings should be at a higher rate than those of a time worker engaged on similar work, piece work basis rates have provided for such higher rates.

Under the first two wages orders <sup>(1)</sup> issued for the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board, piece work basis rates were fixed for females only, but in the Order of June 1921 <sup>(2)</sup>, such rates for all male workers were fixed at 10 per cent above the appropriate minimum time rate. This percentage figure was subsequently varied in May 1922 <sup>(3)</sup> to 15 per cent above time rates. The next occasion on which this method of determining the piece-work basis rate was altered was in October 1922 <sup>(4)</sup>, when a less simple system was devised. Under this Order, minimum time rates were henceforward to depend upon a "cost of living" scale. It was not a scale which laid it down that for every so many points' fall or rise in the official index number for working-class cost of

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(1) Orders Q (2) and Q (5).

(2) Order Q (6).

(3) Order Q (14).

(4) Order Q (20).

living there should be a certain variation in the rate; general minimum time rates per hour were arranged for each grade of labour under numbered columns, at the head of each of which were stated certain limits between which the cost of living index number must lie for such rates given in the column to be payable. For example, when the index number was less than 83 points above July 1914 and not less than 77 (Column 4), the minimum time rate for a Grade I workman was to be  $1/3$  per hour; when it was less than 77 and not less than 70 (Column 5), it was to be  $1/2\frac{1}{2}$  per hour; for limits 64 to 70,  $1/2$  per hour; 58 to 64,  $1/1\frac{1}{2}$  per hour, and so on, until in Column 17, when the limits were "less than 1", the rate for this grade was to 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour. Thus, there was to be a variation of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour for a change of sometimes 6 and sometimes 7 points in the index numbers, a scale which was not far different from that already described as operating by agreement in the brass trades in 1921 and 1922 (1). Piece-work basis rates had a close connection with this new Trade Board scale of rates, for instead of providing that piece-work basis rates should be 15 per cent above the minimum time rates of the appropriate column, the new order stipulated that the piece-work basis rate should be the minimum time rate operative with the addition of 25 per cent of the lowest figure to which the time rate could fall (i.e., as given in Column 17). To

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(1) See Chapter 7, pp. 261 and 270.

illustrate this, let us suppose that the index number was such that Column 4 time rates were operative; then for a grade I worker, the minimum time rate would be  $1/3$  per hour, and the piece work basis rate (that is, a piece worker's minimum rate) would be  $1/3$  plus 25 per cent of  $8\frac{1}{3}$ d. per hour. This system really meant that the differential as between the minimum rate for a time worker and that for a piece worker was always a fixed sum, no matter how many reductions were enforced under the sliding scale. It meant, further, that if an increase or decrease took effect under the scale, the absolute amount of such increase or decrease would be the same for a time worker and piece worker <sup>(1)</sup>, since the rates of Column 17 were fixed sums. Thus, if the minimum time-rate for grade I were  $58/9$  per week ( $1/3$  per hour), and the corresponding piece work basis rate were  $58/9$  plus 25 per cent of  $8\frac{1}{3}$ d. per hour for 47 hours - that is, plus  $8/3$  - a reduction of  $1/11\frac{1}{2}$  per week ( $\frac{1}{3}$ d per hour) as a result of the cost of living index number falling within the limits set out in the next column, would still leave the differential between time worker and piece worker at  $8/3$ , and both time worker and piece worker would both have suffered the same amount of reduction in minimum rate, viz.,  $1/11\frac{1}{2}$  per week. In other words, on each successive fall in the cost of living, the percentage difference between the minimum time rate and the piece work basis rate increased. Under the previous arrangement, by which the percentage difference remained constant,

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(1) Provided, of course, that piece workers were working at rates just yielding the basis rate.



at 15 per cent, a reduction of  $1/11\frac{1}{2}$  per week in the minimum rate for a time worker meant a reduction of 115 per cent of  $1/11\frac{1}{2}$  in the minimum rate applicable to a piece worker.

Incidentally, it may be pointed out that on the basis of the Column 4 rates (i.e., those immediately brought in<sup>to</sup> operation under the Order in question), the piece-work basis rates were in the neighbourhood of 15 per cent above time-rates, not very different from the fixed percentage differential operating previously. This "cost of living" scale and its provisions relating to piece workers, applied to the graded adult male workers only. The making of reductions the same in amount for time workers and piece workers would seem to emphasize the fact that such reductions were in war bonuses, although the Trade Board did not make any distinction between a minimum rate and a bonus.

Actually, this cost of living scale was abandoned early in 1923, after only one reduction had taken effect in accordance with its terms. This reduction had taken place in March 1923, when Column 5 rates became the statutory minimum rates. Had the scheme been retained beyond that date, the next reduction of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per hour would not have taken place until June of that year, when the index number stood at 69. But it was seen that the Trade Board rates were not being changed at a sufficiently rapid pace to cope with changing

conditions of trade (1). During 1921 and 1922, brassworkers' trade union rates had been falling rapidly in accordance with the sliding scale adopted in April 1921. The result was that Trade Board rates for similar classes of work were completely out of line with the general district rates. Although the Trade Board rates for graded workers had commenced at approximately the same figures as those under the trade union agreements (2), later on, as the latter fell much more rapidly, ~~and~~ Trade Board rates were always at a higher level. This was a difficult situation to control, and it often caused annoyance. We are informed that the Trade Board dealt with the matter as intelligently as circumstances would allow (3). It will be recalled that a reduction in brassworkers' bonus amounting to 7/10 per week took effect in October 1922, so that the discrepancy between the two sets of rates for graded adult male workers became very marked indeed. The reduction in Trade Board rates which took place in March 1923 in

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(1) This was the general complaint made against Trade Boards, and it could be attributed to the machinery by which a Trade Board had to work. It was hoped that a "cost of living" sliding scale would remedy matters. The full scale of rates was provided for in the columns given in the Minister's Order Q (20), and as the index number fell to come within the next set of limits, an immediate notice from the Ministry (through the Office of Trade Boards) was sufficient for the variation in rates to take effect, without the usual "notice of proposal", three months' delay and so on.

(2) See Table on p. 311.

(3) Minutes of Evidence. Cave Committee, 13th Day. p.434.

accordance with the sliding scale, did not redress the balance, so that the abandonment of the cost of living scheme just then was only to be expected. A reduction of 1½d per hour in Trade Board rates was made in April 1923 <sup>(1)</sup>, and the difference between the two rates was not so great after this. The following table shows the relationship between the two sets of rates during this particular period.

<u>Grade.</u>	<u>Trade Union</u> <u>Rates</u>	<u>Trade Board Rates.</u>			
	As from October 9th, 1922.	As from October 14th, 1922.	As from March 26th, 1923.	As from April 7th, 1923.	
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	
Grade I.	51/7½	58/9	56/9½	50/11	
Grade II.	58/7½	66/7	64/7½	58/9	
Grade II Polishers.	60/7½	68/6½	66/7	60/8½	
Grade III.	63/7½	72/5½	70/6	64/7½	
Grade III Polishers.	65/7½	74/5	72/5½	66/7	

This table speaks for itself and shows quite clearly that Trade Board rates did not easily adjust themselves to changing conditions,. If a cost of living sliding scale had been adopted at the time when such a scale began to regulate changes in the trade union rates, such an anomalous position would not have arisen.

Naturally, when the Trade Board sliding scale was abandoned, so also was the accompanying formula for determining the piece work basis rates. The Board did not revert to the former uniform percentage differential between time rates and piece work basis rates. Piece work basis rates were stated



alongside the hourly minimum time rates, at approximately 15 per cent higher in each case. In September 1924 <sup>(1)</sup>, when increases in rates were made, the opportunity was taken of bringing the Trade Board rates into line with the rates fixed under outside voluntary agreements; so, advances made then did not correspond to the uniform 3/11 gained by the brassworkers in April 1924 <sup>(2)</sup>. No further change has taken place since that time, and but for a halfpenny per week, the rates for all grades are identical in both cases. The Trade Board has also discontinued the practice of stating the rates as hourly rates. Weekly minimum time-rates and piece-work basis rates are fixed, but the separate existence of a bonus is not countenanced. The piece-work basis rates are approximately 15 per cent in excess of the time-rates <sup>(3)</sup>. The equivalent to a piece-work basis rate in the trade union agreements is 25 per cent above the basis time-rate for grade E (i.e., grade III in the Trade Board list), which with the addition of the bonus of 2/6 $\frac{1}{2}$  makes a piece worker's minimum somewhere about 15 per cent above the total time-rates, as with the Trade Board <sup>(4)</sup>.

In the very first Order <sup>(5)</sup> made for the Board, piece-work basis rates for female workers were established, at a figure of 1d. per hour in excess of the minimum time-rate

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(1) Order Q (28)

(2) See Chapter 7. p. 271.

(3) For full list of rates at present in operation under the Trade Board, see Appendix D.5.

(4) See Chapter 7. p. 273.

(5) Order Q (2)

at each age specified. In spite of the subsequent refinements with regard to occupations, this rule has been maintained. For all workers under what has been called Sections (1) and (2) on pp. 303-4, there was one piecework basis rate operative in each section, irrespective of age or experience, and this rate in each case is 1d. per hour above the rate for "after the completion of 12 months after reaching the age of 18 years". This means that the difference between the piecework basis rate in Section (1) and that in Section (2) is also 1d. per hour. For females not covered by Sections (1) and (2), the piecework basis rates have always been 1d. per hour in excess of the minimum time rates at each age.

Piecework basis rates have undoubtedly been a strong form of protection for the pieceworker, and much of the time of Trade Boards inspectors is taken up with checking the earnings of pieceworkers over a representative period to discover the extent to which piecework prices are adequate. It has been stated above that piecework preponderates in the trades covered by the scope of this particular Board, but no complete statistical record has ever been taken to show the proportion of timework to piecework <sup>(1)</sup>. Inspectors gain some idea of the proportion from visits paid to firms on the Board's list, but the inspection records do not give a sufficiently reliable indication of the state of affairs in this connection. In 1922, 41 firms were visited out of a

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(1) Sometimes workers change over from timework to piecework and vice versa.

total number of about 700 or 800, and the number of work-people employed by the visited firms <sup>was</sup> 974<sup>(1)</sup>. Of those workers, approximately 60 per cent were timeworkers and 40 per cent pieceworkers. Incidentally, the average number of workers employed on work coming within the scope of the Board, per firm, can be deduced from these figures, but as the sample is so small, they cannot be accepted as an accurate index. Material of a similar kind is also available for later years, the numbers being fairly equally divided between timework and piecework in the records for 1923. A table of the results will probably be of more service in studying these records.

Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board.

Inspection Records. (1)

Date.	No. of firms on list.	No. of firms visited.	No. of workpeople employed in visited firms.	Approximate proportions employed on		Average No. of workpeople per firms. (visited)
				Time-work.	Piece-work.	
	about			%	%	
1922	800	41	974	60	40	21
1923	-	-	-	50	50	-
1927	479	40	1251	40	60	31
1928	440	37	1154	45	55	31
1929 ) first ) half ) only )	449	19	447	70	30	24

(1) These figures, kindly supplied by the Inspection Section of the Ministry of Labour, refer to the country as a whole, but in view of the fact that the majority of the firms are situated in the Birmingham district, no great error is involved in assuming that they refer to that area only, and are representative of conditions there.



We should not be justified in arriving at any positive conclusion from this record, either about the more prominent method of payment in the trade or about the average size of the business unit. Apart from the smallness of the samples, it should be borne in mind that a number of firms would only have a proportion of their employees coming under the protective wing of the Trade Board. The danger of working from small samples is illustrated by a comparison between the results obtained from the records for the first half of 1928, and those for the second half of that year. In the first half of 1928, 17 firms were inspected, and the number of workpeople concerned was 801, giving an average of 47 per firm. The corresponding figures for the remainder of that year were: 20 firms, 353 workpeople, with an average of about 17 <sup>(1)</sup>. It should be pointed out that the huge fall in the number of firms on the list as between 1922 and 1929, is not in any way due to a decline in the fortunes of the trades concerned, neither can it be attributed to any tendency for the smaller business to disappear from the competitive field. The difference between 800 and 400 is accounted for by the revised definition which was applied to the trade for the purposes of the Board's administration, in 1924. On the basis of the above record, we may estimate that the total number of workpeople covered by the Board's operation is anything from 12,000 to 14,000, and if we assume

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(1) The writer made a request for authoritative figures showing the average number of workers per firm on the Board's list, but for an unstated reason, the request was not granted.

that about 75 per cent of these are located in the Birmingham district, we may say that somewhere about 10,000 workpeople are affected in the area. We may also conclude perhaps, that for males and females taken together, neither piecework nor timework preponderates. Notwithstanding this tentative conclusion, it is highly probable that if separate records were taken for males and females, it would be found that about 70 to 80 per cent of the females are employed at piece rates, and that timework would be more general among the males. Much of the work performed by female stamp and pressworkers is of a repetitive character, which fact renders such a trade eminently suitable for piecework operation. Special importance, then, attaches to the piecework basis rates fixed by the Trade Board.

In addition to the above extensive provisions for regulating working conditions, the Board has from its inception drawn up rules for determining the rate of remuneration for overtime. The normal working week has been declared to be 47 hours, as in practically all the metal trades of the district; and for Saturday working, the normal number of hours has been fixed at  $4\frac{1}{2}$ . This is exclusive of Sunday and of statutory holidays, for <sup>there</sup> work on these days is regarded as overtime. The minimum rate for overtime in respect of time worked by a worker, whether employed on timework or piecework, on a Saturday, in excess of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours is at the rate of time-and-a-half (i.e., one and a half times the minimum rate otherwise applicable), and this rate is payable, even if the

total number of hours worked in the week is question is less than 47. For overtime in excess of 47 hours in the week, the rate is time-and-a-quarter for the first two hours, and time-and-a-half thereafter. For work on a Sunday or a statutory holiday, the rate is double time (i.e., twice the appropriate minimum time rate). These overtime conditions follow to some extent those under the existing trade union agreements in the brass trades, but in the latter there<sup>v</sup> is no reference to any normal number of hours for Saturday working. Another difference is that the trade union agreements cater for night-shift workers. As night-work is, of course, not legally permissible for female workers, and as in any case night-shift working is not prevalent among the men in the stamped or pressed metal wares trades, there would be no need in Trade Board orders for such a condition that payment for night work should be at the rate of time-and-a-quarter, as in the trade union agreement. On the whole, then, in the measures taken by the Trade Board for adjusting the wages of male workers, it is patent that voluntary agreements between the trade union and the employers in the finishing sections of the brass trades, have set the pace and have been the model by which Trade Board policy has been directed. One may quote yet another instance of this in the Trade Board order of October 21st, 1926 <sup>(1)</sup>, in which the rate for male workers <sup>(2)</sup>, of 21 years and

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(1) Order Q.(33)

(2) If employed as braziers, burnishers, drop-stampers, polishers, or dippers who are also bronzers.



under 21½ years of age qualifying for Grade I, was fixed at 49/6 per week. This provision was exactly similar to that contained in the agreement of February 1926, between the union and the employers' association <sup>(1)</sup>, when the bonus for such Grade C. men was fixed at 15/6, making a total rate of 49/6.

This aspect of the work of the Board, that is, its relationship to voluntary trade union agreements, will receive further treatment before we close this chapter on the experience of Trade Boards in the brass trades. For the moment, we shall find it more intriguing to concentrate upon what are undoubtedly the most significant events in the history of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Trade Board, those events which have an intimate connection with the question with which the second paragraph of the present chapter opens. By this time, the Ministry has certainly had cause to know well enough with what manner of trade it has been dealing, since this Trade Board has been one of the most troublesome of all the Board<sup>s</sup>. Questions of definition and scope constitute the most awkward of the administrative problems with which Trade Boards and the Ministry are confronted, and the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board has claimed more than its fair share of those difficult situations which arise from time to time when a decision has to be given on

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(1) See Chapter 7. p. 272

the question of whether a particular worker, or class of worker, or factory, may be considered to be within the scope of the Board. No matter how carefully the original definition with regard to scope may <sup>have</sup> be<sup>en</sup> drawn up, one always expects, in the early days of a Board's existence at least, a considerable amount of discussion on the subject of scope. It is not often however, that the differences that arise come so much before the eyes of the public, as they have done in the case of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board, and only on rare occasions is it found necessary to make material amendments to the definition of the trade in which a Board operates. Decisions on matters of scope given by the Courts and by the Ministry there have been in plenty, but these have dealt ~~with~~ in the main with particular classes of workers, and not, as in the case of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board with particular works, factories or trades. Such decisions have formed precedents which have not meant that objections raised have led to a modification of the original definition. In this respect, then, the troubles of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board deserve attention.

A perusal of the definition<sup>(1)</sup> under which the Board worked from the beginning of 1920 till towards the end of 1924, shows that the trade envisaged by the Ministry as the stamped or pressed metal wares trade was one engaged in making articles from metals other than precious metals by the process of cold stamping or cold pressing,<sup>(2)</sup> and an enumeration of about twenty-five articles or classes of articles was included. In addition to this list, there was an omnibus clause which read: "or any similar articles or metal parts of such articles". Then followed a list of the operations which were included on the score that they were "carried on in association with, or in conjunction with the manufacture of such stamped or pressed metal articles", such as annealing, hardening, polishing, lacquering and so forth. The incidental operations involved in warehouse work were likewise within the scope of the order. There were, moreover, certain definite exclusions, these covering the work which came within the province of four other Trade Boards,<sup>(3)</sup> together with the steel pen-making trade, the minting of coins, and the process of hand-embossing. Thus, although there was a semblance of definition by process, actually it was definition by article produced, and the whole definition was one which, in view of the nature of the trades

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(1) See Appendix. D. 1.

(2) Including the operations of piercing and cutting.

(3) Holloware Board; Button-making Board; Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making Board; Pin, Hook and Eyes and Snap Fastener Board.



which it concerned, might have been interpreted in a variety of ways.

In the early days of the Board's existence, the members of the Board, both workers and employers, regarded its scope as very general indeed, and were prepared to place a wide interpretation upon the definition. But it soon became evident that the Ministry was not in agreement with this attitude. Acute differences arose on account of the inherent ambiguity of the omnibus clause referred to above. Inspectors were not always able to agree among themselves, the department itself had occasion to differ with inspectors, and in several cases the Trade Board was not able to see eye to eye with the department. As an example of these diverging opinions, we may point to the case of the manufacture of stamped hinges. These articles were obviously cabinet fittings, and seemed to lie within the scope of the definition; yet the ruling of the department in the matter, namely, that they were not included, was contrary to the opinion of the Board. There seemed much less justification for the inclusion of bedstead mounts, and yet these were held to be within the scope of the order. Members of the Board were quite naturally dissatisfied, because they could legitimately claim, as members of the trade, to have a more intimate knowledge than a government department of conditions in the trade. They felt that they were far more likely to know whether a particular article could be considered one for the manufacture of which the Trade Board had

the power to decide the rate of the workers' remuneration.

Several times during 1920 differences arose between the Board and the department, often on minute points of detail, such as that in which it was held by the department that if a worker was employed in carrying goods within an establishment from one of the departments to the warehouse, he was entitled to a Trade Board rate, whereas, if he were engaged in carrying goods from one department to another, the Trade Board rate was not applicable. Such differences as these were brought more into the open towards the end of 1920, when the workers' representatives on the Board held that certain workpeople at Nottingham and Long Eaton, engaged in carriage and bobbin manufacture from stamped sheet brass or steel were entitled to the rates fixed by the Board. Correspondence passed between the leading workers' representative and the Ministry and, in October, nearly a month after the matter had first been taken up, the decision of the department was given that these workers did not fall within the jurisdiction of the Trade Board. At the next meeting of the Board, the following month, the employers' representatives agreed <sup>with</sup> ~~that~~ the opinion of the workers' side, so that the action of the Ministry was bound to breed discontent and endanger the smooth working of the Trade Board machinery.

Discussions of this nature were becoming such frequent and troublesome features that the Board requested one of its appointed members to make an independent investigation

and to report on the scope of the Board. <sup>I</sup>On the resulting Report<sup>(1)</sup> the opinions held by members of the Board were favoured. The Ministry attempted to deal with the matter by formulating an explanatory ruling for the guidance of the parties concerned, which distinguished between "primary" articles or trades and "contributory" articles or trades. The former class were definitely included within the scope of the Board, the latter were excluded unless they constituted a certain percentage of the output of the establishment. The Board, however, never expressed a willingness to accept the Ministry's formula.<sup>(2)</sup> In order to minimise such differences between the Board and the department, and to remove cause for dissatisfaction, it was decided in 1921, a few months before the work of the Cave Committee was begun, to refer such matters of scope to the standing committee of the Trade Board,<sup>(3)</sup> so that members of the Board might be given an opportunity of expressing their views on the matter. This arrangement met with approval on the part of the Board, and aided considerably in easing the situation. This method of procedure had the advantage that questions relating to scope were best settled by those who knew the trade and who were actually engaged in it; but on the other hand it was likely to accentuate the

(1) As this was a confidential report, the writer was unable to gain access to it, and thus cannot give the opinions expressed therein. (2) Minutes of Evidence, Cave Committee,

(3) This was a sub-committee of the Board, p. 437. composed of four employers' representatives and four workers' representatives.



the delays associated with the administrative machinery of Trade Board operation. It was pointed out in evidence before the Cave Committee that under such an arrangement a dispute over scope might have its origin about four or five months before the final confirmation of a decision were given by the Ministry.<sup>(1)</sup> Altogether, then, the administration of Trade Board orders was no easy proceeding.

The practical difficulties arising in the factories and workshops were chiefly of three kinds. There are very few manufacturers in the stamped or pressed metal wares trade who confine themselves to the production of a single article. A large variety of dissimilar articles from the point of view of the use for which they are intended may be turned out in any one establishment. The term "general brassfoundry", for instance, connotes a multitude of metal wares requiring treatment in various degrees by the stamper or presser, the dresser and finisher, and so on. Similarly, in the manufacture of metal small wares other than of brass, firms may produce a wide range of articles, for the making of which similar processes are involved. Now, as the definition of the Stamped of Pressed Metal Wares Trade laid emphasis on the article produced rather than on the actual processes of manufacture, decisions on question of scope, in accordance with the definition, often meant that whereas one article was deemed

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(1) Minutes of Evidence, Cave Committee, p. 434.

to be within the scope of it, another one produced by the same worker from the same material on the same machine was not so included. Such a worker may be employed on Trade Board work in the morning, and on other work of a similar nature in the afternoon. For example, on one occasion, two articles had been placed before the officials of the department; one was a buckle and the other what is known as a bombas.<sup>(1)</sup> The former was held to be within the scope of the definition, and the latter to be without; yet the girl who made the buckle made the bombas on the same machine in the same shop from the same materials. Again, if a washer were supplied for fitting to a burner, its maker could lawfully claim the Trade Board rate, if it were supplied for use in the motor trade, such was not the case. Similarly, a brass cup for use on a burner was within, while for any other purpose it may be without the scope of the Board. In some cases of this nature, the material used may not be the same, but the process and the worker may be identical. Thus, if a sweets dish were made of brass for subsequent silver-plating, it was work for which the Trade Board rate had to be paid; if it were made of nickel-silver for subsequent plating, this was not so, yet the two dishes may have been cut from the same die. The production of a silver badge

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(1) A bombas is a highly finished ornament used in South America along the rein-slides. It is made in the harness furniture trade at Walsall.

would not concern the Trade Board, because it was made from a precious metal, but a brass metal badge was different, although actually it may be fashioned from one die, and the press on which it was made may be operated by the same worker. Anomalies of this kind could be multiplied without end, and they serve to illustrate the perplexing administrative difficulties which were encountered. When workers were employed on such kinds of work, to what rate of wages were they legally entitled? How could an inspector say whether the correct rate was being observed when the worker was not employed for the whole time on articles considered to be officially within the scope of the Board?

Then there was also the case of stampings which were capable of being made up into more than one article. What is known in the trade as a brass cupped blank is probably the best example of this kind of article. It is a small blank cut out by the press, and then pressed out into the shape of a cup. From the shape of a cup it may afterwards be drawn out or otherwise treated so as to become a finished product or part of a composite product. There are dozens of such products into which it may be turned, several of which may be produced in the same establishment. The final product may or may not have been an article which was considered to fall within the Trade Board definition, and at the time of pressing into the form<sup>of</sup> a cupped blank, ~~the~~



the final purpose for which it was intended, would probably not be known. As further examples of such articles, one may mention a case for holding a battery and a shaving-stick soap box. The former would be within and the latter without the scope of the Board. Was the Trade Board rate to be paid to the workers at the press when he or she may be assisting in the production of some articles which were within and some which were without the scope of the Board?

A third kind of problem which has a psychological significance <sup>arose</sup> ~~was~~ from this peculiar feature of the small metal wares trade. It often happened in the workshop that of two workers employed <sup>side by side on similar operations, one was engaged</sup> in producing articles for which the Trade Board rate could be claimed, and another was producing some other article with which the Trade Board was not concerned. In such circumstances the employer was not bound to pay the Trade Board rate to all workers in the shop, but in order to keep the peace and to maintain proper discipline in the establishment, the Trade Board rate had to become the general rate for the shop. In some such cases, workers entitled to the Trade Board minimum rate formed only a small proportion of the whole labour force, but it is recognised among employers to be "a bad policy to introduce a rate in a factory for a small percentage of workers which differs from the rate paid to the majority; consequently, whatever rate has to be introduced has to be a general rate." (1)

(1) F. H. Chandler - Minutes of Evidence. Cave Committee, p. 435.

Among a group of workers at the same bench, some may be engaged in brazing stamped chain, that is, chain made up of pieces of pressed metal, and others in brazing wire chain. There was the Trade Board rate for braziers applicable to the one set of workers, and this had to be the rate for those working on the wire chain as well. The output of stamped chain might have been but 10 per cent. of the total production; yet the rate fixed by the Trade Board became the general rate applicable to work which really lay outside the scope of the Trade Board order.

Of course, it is open to anyone to say: "If it were considered advisable to set up protective wage-fixing machinery for one set of workers, why should <sup>not</sup> another set of workers receive similar protection, even though a faulty definition has not provided for them officially?" An employer, if he were prepared to accept the principle of protection at all, would not perhaps object to the sentiment implied in this question. He is probably fully alive also to the necessity for removing all potential cause of jealousy that may be engendered between one class of worker and another as a result of differential wage scales. The employer's complaint, in such cases, was founded on something wider than workshop psychology; it related to the disadvantages under which he may be placed through payment of a Trade Board rate when competitors in the line of business not falling within the scope of the Board need not pay such

minimum. Thus, there might be other makers of wire chain who did not make any stamped chain, and they would be in a position to undercut the manufacturer who worked on both lines. A good employer does not object to paying a decent wage provided he is assured that his competitors must pay their workpeople at the same rate. For example, a manufacturer at Walsall had a shop containing twenty to thirty power-presses, but as far as he could judge, only about 50 to 60 per cent. of the workpeople would be legally entitled to Trade Board rates. He could not discriminate between one set of workers and another, and the Trade Board rate was paid to all. At the same time, he was competing with other firms in the articles he produced which were not under the Trade Board definition, and these other firms were paying lower rates of wages in accordance with the terms of a voluntary agreement negotiated between the Harness and Saddlery Furniture Trades' Association and the employers' organisation in this trade. (1)

This question of definition and scope, then, was an ever-present source of trouble, largely because the nature of the organisation and structure of the small metal wares trade rendered the formation of a definition of precise application a difficult business. There are some firms whose sole business is the making of completed articles produced by the

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(1) Minutes of Evidence. Cave Committee, p. 227. Also p. 649, also p. 655.



stamp or press. There are other firms producing stamped or pressed objects which form part of some composite product; in this case, there are firms among them which merely produce the stamped or pressed parts and sell them to others in the trade for the purpose of making up the final article. They may even be producing stamped or pressed parts for a large number of dissimilar composite products. Again, there is the firm which manufactures a composite product and at the same time makes its own stamped or pressed parts. Yet another variation is that of the firm which carries on the stamping or pressing of completed articles or parts of composite articles in conjunction with other manufactures. Roughly, one may draw a distinction between the "general contractor" engaged in stamping and pressing only, and those engaged in stamping and pressing as incidental to the main manufacture in their works.<sup>(1)</sup> In view of such complications, one may fully sympathise with any Trade Board or any inspectorate which endeavoured to administer certain wages orders in conformity with a definition which catered for products rather than process. In order to remove the obstacles to the smooth working of the Trade Board machinery, a series of conferences were arranged between representatives of the Board and of certain other bodies, and the Ministry, in the hope that a

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(1) Report of Sir William Mackenzie concerning the scope of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Trades Trade Board and the Button-Making Trade Board, 1923.

more equitable definition may be devised, but little agreement resulted. In March 1923, the Minister gave notice of his intention to make a Special Order to vary the existing one<sup>(1)</sup>, and a number of objections to this draft definition were received from persons, firms, companies and representative organisations. So a Public Enquiry became necessary, Sir William Mackenzie<sup>(2)</sup> being appointed Commissioner. Evidence was taken in London and in Birmingham in June, 1923.

The draft order setting out the proposed new definition was much more elaborate than its predecessor, and if the original order erred on the side of extreme simplicity, and thereby gave rise to ambiguities, this one went to the other extreme.<sup>(3)</sup> It must have tried an employer's patience to read through it, and its qualifying phrases and cross-references would certainly not prove to the liking of the worker <sup>who</sup> ~~it~~ endeavoured to make himself acquainted with these new proposals for simplifying the work of the Trade Board. The processes and operations were given in greater detail, and in one of the schedules attached to the order, a comprehensive list of articles was included, these being classified under the twelve headings:

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- (1) That is, the original Order of 1919.
  - (2) Now Lord Moulree.
  - (3) See Appendix. D.

Cabinet etc. fittings,  
 Door etc. fittings,  
 Light fittings,  
 Bag etc. fittings,  
 Umbrella fittings, etc.  
 Clothing fittings, etc.  
 Bedstead Mounts, etc.  
 Toilet Sundries, etc.  
 Smokers' Sundries, etc.  
 Stationers' Sundries,  
 Cycle and Motor Accessories,  
 Miscellaneous articles.

Button-making was included if it were carried on in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of articles which came within the scope of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board as defined in this new order and its schedules and appendix. <sup>(1)</sup> The list of exclusions was longer than in the order of 1919. Work of a similar nature which came under six other Trade Boards <sup>(2)</sup> was excluded, together with common carriers and certain operations in the making of jewellery; motor-car, motor-cycle, and cycle components; cycle or motor-cycle accessories where such were made in establishments mainly engaged in the manufacture of cycles or motor-cycles or motor-cars or of components; lamps; electro-plate wares made from Britannia metal or nickel or similar white alloys;

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(1) There was also a Button-Making Trade Board, and if in any establishment mainly engaged in Button-making, other stamped or pressed goods were made as well, then those firms were excluded from the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board draft Order.

(2) Coffin Furniture and Cereament Making Trade Board; Hollow-ware Trade Board; Perambulator and Invalid Carriage Trade Board; Pin, Hook and Eye and Snap Fastener Trade Board; Toy Trade Board; and Button-Making Trade Board. For latter, see Footnote (1) above.



and locks and latches. (1) Thus, it was not a definition which catered exclusively for process, neither was it one which gave more attention to product. Perhaps a little more stress had been laid on process in this new draft compared with the provisions of the previous Order.

Among the objections were those against any extension of scope, together with requests for withdrawals of certain sections. Some employers thought it best that no new order should be made while the fate of the Trade Boards still hung in the balance; they anticipated further legislation with regard to Trade Boards in general. But the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board was anxious to get the matter of scope settled and opposed any suggestion of postponement of the issue. Objections to the draft order had been lodged by manufacturers who claimed that they formed part of an entirely separate trade, and, as such, should be excluded; and also from manufacturers who were mainly engaged in other processes of manufacture, but whose output of stamped or pressed goods was small. There were also claims from some quarters that there was adequate machinery for the effective regulation of wages in certain sections of the trade. It was always very difficult to deal with the establishment in which stamping and pressing were done as part of the whole manufacture. Perhaps the best illustration of such a case is that of the

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(1) Certain lock fittings were included within the draft Order.

manufacture of gas and electric light fittings and equipment. The components might be any combination of brass and iron castings, hot brass stampings and pressings, cold brass stampings and pressings, drawn brass or steel tubes, brass and steel wire, chain, and glassware. Employers in such a trade as this would wish to be free from Trade Board interference for those of their workers affected by the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board.

The main objections brought forward at the Enquiry were on behalf of manufacturers of brace<sup>e</sup> fittings, manufacturers of motor accessories, makers of cast-iron holloware, and makers of steel pens who also made stationers' sundries. There were only five or six firms making brace fittings, and three of these, situated in Walsall and Birmingham, accounted for about 90 per cent. of the total output. So it was contended that the manufacture of brace fittings was a separate trade, and also that there was other machinery by voluntary agreement for regulating wages. Although there were no separate employers' association or trade union in the trade, it was pointed out that the firms were either members of the Harness Furniture Manufacturers' Association or of the Engineering and National Employers' Federation, and that rates of wages might easily be the same as those agreed between the former of these bodies and the Harness and Saddlery Furniture Trade Union at Walsall, since that union

included brace fitting workers in its membership. Motor and motor-cycle accessories manufacturers also claimed that they formed a separate trade, and that the only type of firm that should be included was the general stamper and piercer who turned out stamped or pressed accessories among other articles in the course of his business. The components manufacturer who also did a certain amount of trade in accessories was definitely excluded, and it was held to be rather arbitrary that this type of firm should be treated differently from the type of firm whose main concern was accessories manufacture. In this case also it was urged that the machinery for regulating wages was adequate.

A stronger case was put forward by the cast-iron holloware trade, which is mainly localised in South Staffordshire. In this instance, it was held that stamped or pressed work formed such a small proportion of the total work done that it was hardly equitable for Trade Board rates to be paid to this minority of workers when those rates were not in line with the rates payable to the majority, these having been arranged by agreement between the National Employers' Federation and various trades unions. Makers of steel pens came under the list of exclusions so far as pen-making was concerned, but they were not excluded for such of their workers who were engaged in the making of stationers' sundries. Firms making sundries but not pens were within the scope of the draft order; it was the makers of steel



pens who raised objection. They held that about 85 per cent. of the pen-makers were organised in the Penworkers' Federation, and that at times pen makers might easily be switched over from the making of pens to the making of sundries. In addition to these four specific cases, all the difficulties of Trade Board administration for workers in the miscellaneous metal working establishments were laid bare.

In weighing up the evidence, Sir William was inclined to think that exclusions should be granted sparingly, because too many exclusions would render a Trade Board absolutely unworkable. His opinion with regard to exclusion was based upon his conception of the structure of the metal trades with which the Board was called upon to deal. As for the general stamper or piercer, unless he was only engaged in precious metals as a jewellers' stamper, he should definitely be within the scope of the Board. These were the firms, usually of small size, which did stamping and pressing work on contract for the trade. In the case of the manufacture of a composite product of which only a minor portion is stamped or pressed work, the Commissioner thought that there was sufficient ground for exclusion. But firms of this kind were not entitled to claim exemption if they sold such stamped or pressed wares apart from the composite product, neither if they used their stamps and presses for making other articles for purposes of sale, for then they would be engaged in the

"trade"<sup>(1)</sup> of stamping and pressing. Thus, if a bedstead manufacturer produced his own bedstead mounts, he ought not to be brought within the scope of the Trade Board, unless he sold mounts separately. Theoretically, this is a very good rule, but in practice there were bound to be a number of cases in which it was going to be extremely difficult to decide whether a minor or major portion of the manufacture of some composite product were stamped or pressed work. In such instances, it was thought that it should be a matter for determination in each individual case. In regard to exclusions in general, several factors had to be taken into account, such as the rates and conditions of service and the degree of organisation, together with the nature of the existing machinery for regulating wages. Sir William Mackenzie was able to listen to the contention that existing machinery was adequate outside Trade Board administration, with sufficient scepticism to realise that a voluntary agreement is one thing, and the strength of the organisation to enforce observance of the agreement is another. For instance, there was an agreement in the harness furniture trade at Walsall, but the union had never been sufficiently strong to obtain rates at all comparable to Trade Board rates. Again, rates of wages drawn up by the employers for women workers in

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(1) The Commissioner came to this conclusion from his own definition of the word "trade", which he conceived to be "manufacture for sale or exchange."

the engineering trades were not the subject of any specific agreements, because the unions concerned would not agree to them. Such rates have been enforced merely because organisation amongst the women workers was not by a long way sufficiently developed to resist the application of such rates. Neither could it be legitimately claimed that employers in the trades were well organised.

There were many considerations, then, to influence the Commissioner, one way or the other, most of them arising out of the general complaint which is admirably put in the following manner in the report on the Enquiry:

"The existing Order, as well as the Draft, does not deal with a trade or a specified trade, but with a 'conglomeration' or 'multitude' of trades, many of them quite distinctive, and that trades that are included in the Draft Order have a relationship with trades which are excluded, while many of the trades which are included in the Draft Order have no relation to each other. The opinion was expressed that there was no such trade, and that it was absurd to call a trade the schedule of articles within a certain range of size which were produced by the process of stamping and pressing, and that the whole thing was so hopelessly bad that it could not be put right." (1)

The Commissioner, however, could not subscribe to the view that there was no such trade. His attention was fixed on the general stampers and piercers in the Birmingham district who were, on the whole, fairly small firms. His

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(1) Report of Sir William Mackenzie. Op. cit. p. 19.



formula for deciding exclusions has already been outlined above, and he went further by suggesting that the form of the Order should be simplified, and that an enumeration of articles need not form part of the Order. He was of the opinion that if ~~the~~<sup>an</sup> explanatory circular were distributed to all concerned at the same time as the Order were brought before them, this could contain a list of articles deemed to be within the scope of the Board, and could serve as a guide to the Trade Board and to employers generally.

In accordance with the findings of the Commissioner, a new Draft Order was issued in February, 1924. A comparison of this<sup>(1)</sup> with the Draft of 1923 shows that it was very much simpler and that the list of exclusions had been extended. In the definition of the trade itself, the first general clause was:

"the manufacture from metal in sheet or strip form by cold stamping or pressing of articles known in the trade as metal smallwares."

This was followed by a list of operations and processes which went with stamping and pressing in the manufacture of these wares. The case of the composite product was provided for by excluding

"the production ..... of any article or part of any article in an establishment in which such an article or part is incorporated with or fitted to any other article made in that establishment or part of any other article made in that establishment."

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(1) See Appendix. D.3.

by the processes and operations within the scope of the Order. This exclusion was qualified, though, to the extent that an article which was mainly made by the processes within the Order was not exempt, neither was

"an establishment ..... mainly engaged"  
in such processes and operations "and/or  
brassfounding."

Amongst the list of exclusions were to be found the articles made by the pen-makers,<sup>(1)</sup> articles made by firms mainly engaged in manufacturing locks and latches<sup>(2)</sup>, electrical machinery appliances, apparatus or accessories<sup>(3)</sup>, articles made in cast-iron holloware establishments, work done by out-platers, motor-car accessories, articles made from wire, and "the manufacture of lamps, medals, iron and steel hinges, harness furniture, driving chains, ammunition, domestic kitchen utensils and parts of such articles". Altogether, then, the Board was to operate in a much more restricted field than hitherto, but the brassfoundries in which a large amount of stamped or pressed work was done were definitely to be within the scope of the Order. Instead of the list of articles being included in the Order itself, the Instructional Circular was sent out as the Commissioner had recommended, in which not only was the list given, but also an illustration to show the new rule with regard to firms mainly engaged in

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- (1) These would be the stationers' sundries.
  - (2) That is, door fittings.
  - (3) But not small electric light fittings.

producing some other article or articles not within the scope of the Order. A glance at this long list of articles shows very forcibly that the brass trades are fairly well represented in them. (1)

Further objections were lodged against the description of the trade given in this second Draft Order, with the result that Sir William Mackenzie was directed to hold another Enquiry, this being held at Birmingham on May 6th, 1924. The objections came from the Brassfounders' Employers' Association, manufacturers of motor-cycle and cycle accessories, and manufacturers of stationers' sundries. (2) The brassfounders claimed exclusion on two grounds; firstly, they held that stamped or pressed wares formed only a small percentage of the output of the firms concerned, and as it was alleged that 90 per cent. of the work done fell definitely outside the scope of the Board, in accordance with the formula adopted in the report on the 1923 enquiry, the brassfounders should be excluded. Reference was made to the "difficulty of dissecting the processes for wages purposes" "because this was likely" to create jealousy among employees." (3) The second reason why exclusion was justified in the eyes of the employers was that there were voluntary agreements in the trade for regulating wages. The director of the

(1) See Appendix. D. 4.

(2) "Birmingham Post", May 7th, 1924.

(3) Ibid.

Also Second Report of Sir Wm. Mackenzie on the scope of the Stamped & Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board.



employers' association claimed that his association represented two-thirds or perhaps three-quarters of the local firms, a claim which was disputed by the workers' representatives. There was no objection on the part of the employers to the inclusion of firms which made stamped or pressed metal articles for purposes of sale. The workers' representative who, incidentally, is an official of the Brass and Metal Mechanics Society, strongly opposed this application for the exclusion of brassfounders. He pointed out quite rightly that, although his union catered for the classes of male workers for whom the Trade Board had fixed minimum rates, the women workers were not similarly protected; at least, several unions were concerned with these female workers, but trade unionism was not particularly effective among them. The employers were also reminded that in the early days of the Board's existence they had welcomed it as a means of compelling the small shop-owner, who was regarded as a "sweater", to pay rates of wages equal to those paid by the larger firms. Without a Trade Board, it would be extremely difficult to get these smaller firms to pay decent wages, and the larger employers would again be faced with what they always called <sup>an</sup>unfair competition. In the old days, the employers used to point to these small firms and say to the union: "When your Society can control the labour in those smaller shops, we are quite prepared to

grant you a minimum wage." Now, in 1924, the workers were able to say, "You have machinery for compelling the smaller firms to pay the same minimum wage as you larger employers have to recognise; if you want to avoid meeting further competition from them, allow that machinery to continue in operation."

The claim on behalf of the manufacturers of motor-cycle and cycle accessories was put forward by the Coventry Engineering Employers' Association and the British Cycle and Motor-cycle Manufacturers and Traders' Union of Coventry. In the Draft Order, accessories for motor-cars had been placed among the list of exclusions, and the objecting employers could not appreciate the fine distinction made between motor-car accessories and accessories for motor-cycles and cycles. The workers' representative contended that it was largely a question of wages, suggesting that the wages of operatives were the target at which some firms were aiming. The employers strongly resented this insinuation. As for stationers' sundries, it will be recalled that these were only excluded from the Trade Board's scope if they were produced in establishments mainly engaged in making steel or base metal pens. There were also makers of imitation jewellery who occasionally placed stationers' sundries among their lines of manufacture, and these were likewise excluded. Makers who confined themselves to stationers' sundries very justly claimed that the Draft Order laid them open to unfair

competition, because pen-makers and makers of imitation jewellery were not bound to pay the Trade Board rates, and the workers' representative agreed that this was a reasonable application for exclusion. There were two courses open; either to exclude them, which would have created a dangerous precedent and have aimed a serious blow at the very existence of the Board, or to include jewellers and pen-makers. Although it was realised that there was bound to be a certain amount of overlapping, the jewellers and the penmakers did not wish to be included under the Board's jurisdiction. Both employers and workmen were of that opinion.<sup>(1)</sup> It was pointed out that pen-workers were sufficiently well organised to have established a Joint Industrial Council to deal with questions of wages in the trade. During the course of the Enquiry, a feeling was expressed that the pin, hook and eye trade should be dealt with in a similar manner to the button-making trade in its relation to the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board, but the representatives of the Pin, Hook and Eye and Snap Fastener Trade Board gave no support to the suggestion.

When another Draft Order appeared as a result of this Enquiry, the only alteration made was the omission of the reference to brassfounding from the second qualification which had been attached to the first exclusion.<sup>(2)</sup> The

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(1) For the jewellers, the Jewellery, Silver, and Electro-Plate and Allied Traders' Association; and the National Union of Gold, Silver, and Allied Trades for the workers. For the pen-makers, the Association of British Steel Pen Makers; and the Penworkers' Federation for the operatives.

(2) See p.340 for actual wording extracted from Draft Order.



effect of this has been that brassfounders do not come within the scope of the Order if they only make stamped or pressed ware for use in their own business. If they sell such goods to the public, or to another manufacturer, then they come within the scope of the Trade Board. The notice of intention to vary the Order of 1919 was given on June 2nd, 1924, and the new Order itself was made on August 5th, 1924. Since that date, it has undergone no alteration.

Many complaints that employers had made at these two enquiries had been voiced previously during the sitting of the Cave Committee on the working of the Trade Board Acts. At that time, there had been several references to overlapping of another kind, both by employers' and workers' representatives. There were four Trade Boards fixing rates of wages for work of a similar nature, and it was sometimes found that in some establishments where work coming under more than one Board was being carried on, workers working side by side were entitled to different rates, because the rates fixed by these four Boards were scarcely ever in line with one another. The four Boards were, the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board, the Coffin Furniture and Cerement Making Board, the Pin, Hook and Eye and Snap Fastener Board, and the Button-making Board, and it had been proposed quite early in the life of these Boards that they should all amalgamate to form one strong Board in order to avoid the fixing of widely diverging rates. The suggestion

came from the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board, but the others did not receive it favourably. At the outset, separate Boards had been welcomed, and the members of the three smaller Boards felt later that the interests of their trades would be completely submerged in any scheme of amalgamation. So, they decided to preserve their separate identity. As far as button-making was concerned, provision was made later, as will have been noted already,<sup>(1)</sup> for any overlapping that might arise. The principle might also have been extended to cover the other cases, but that has never been done. Much was made also at the time of the Cave Committee of the anomalies resulting from ambiguity in definition. It was suggested by employers that the Ministry had been too ambitious in its attempts to schedule operations,<sup>(2)</sup> and that definition should be by "process"<sup>(3)</sup>. It was further suggested that one Board could not cover the whole of the trades satisfactorily<sup>(4)</sup> and that several Boards would be required for that purpose. The workers' representatives were prepared to support the suggestion that definition should be by "process".<sup>(5)</sup>

Employers objected also to the Board's practice of fixing rates for skilled workers, mainly on the grounds that sufficient machinery existed through voluntary agreements to cater for such workpeople. It was alleged that, although there

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- (1) See Footnote (1) on page 332
  - (2) Minutes of Evidence, Cave Committee, p. 433.
  - (3) Ibid, p. 216.
  - (4) Ibid, p. 437.
  - (5) Ibid, p. 654.

may be no employers' association in some of the smaller trades within the Board's scope, this did not mean that firms were not associated with any employers' organisation. Such firms usually, it was said, became members of an association in some trade closely allied to their own, as in the case of brace and suspender fittings makers at Walsall, who belonged to the Harness Furniture Employers' Association. It was stated, too, that many firms were members of the Engineering and Allied Employers' Federation, and that altogether about 80 per cent. of the firms would be associated with some such organisation.<sup>(1)</sup> Against this was told the same tale as was later to be unfolded at the Public Enquiries, namely, that there were many small firms in the trade which had no connection with any employers' association. The reply to the statement that the harness furniture trade agreement catered for workers at Walsall was to the effect that such rates were of recent establishment,<sup>(2)</sup> that only about 5 per cent. of the women workers were members of the trade union, and that the men also were badly organised. In fact, the union had been so weak that the only very low rates had been secured, and these compared unfavourably with those fixed by the Trade Board. Employers had also referred to the arrangements for deciding the rates of wages for females in the engineering and allied trades of the district. Throughout 1920 employers had been

(1) Ibid., p. 998.

(2) They were agreed upon in 1918.



anticipating the lapsing of the provisions relating to "prescribed rates" as continued in the Industrial Courts Act of 1919, and they had been entering into negotiations with the unions concerned for the establishment of a district schedule of rates for women workers. The rates submitted by the employers were regarded as unduly low by the workers, and when this schedule, which included a bonus subject to a cost of living sliding scale, was presented by the employers in April, 1921, the unions rejected it. The unions never would recognize these rates, and employers proceeded to enforce the rates, knowing full well that organisation among women workers was too poor to give rise to any show of resistance. In view of these happenings, how could it be contended that there was adequate machinery for effectively regulating wages of women workers throughout the engineering and allied trades? Such workers were still at the mercy of the employers, and whatever machinery there was in existence had broken down. The rates under the Munition Statutory Rules and Orders or under the operation of the Wages (Temporary Regulation) Act had reached 43/6 for a "skilled" adult female. When the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board fixed its first rate at 9d. per hour (35/3 per week), the engineering rates had been immediately dropped to 38/-,<sup>(1)</sup> and in the schedule of rates which the employers were enforcing after April, 1921, further reductions were in

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(1) Minutes of Evidence, Cave Committee, p. 649.

store. Employers complained of the delay, which took place in the fixing of Trade Board rates. When rates were finally confirmed it was some months after they had been considered, so that on confirmation of Trade Board rates conditions of Trade had changed visibly for the worse, and employers claimed that they were justified in making further reductions.

The workers' representatives strongly supported the fixing of rates for skilled male workers, although there were corresponding rates fixed by voluntary agreements. Their reasons were that if such rates were not made legally binding, employers would take advantage of any weakness exhibited in trade union organisation to force down the rates for skilled men to the level of the unskilled. They feared also that the agreements themselves might be endangered. Another reason, not quite so potent as the others, was that in the absence of any Trade Board rates for skilled workers, in times of slackness the skilled men would compete with the unskilled, placing greater hardship on the latter. If there were no minimum rate for the skilled man and he refused to depose a less skilled hand, it was said that he would be deprived of his unemployment benefit. Against this, of course, one has only to say that there was a trade union minimum rate to satisfy the employment exchange authorities, and that, in any case, it is quite natural for the skilled man to get the better chance in times of depression. It was contended by the workers' representatives that

the only reason employers opposed the fixing of "skilled" rates was the depression which had set in in 1921. Originally, they had co-operated heartily in fixing such rates by having equal representation with workers on a Trade Board sub-committee which had been constituted with the object of "considering and reporting on special rates for special classes of skilled and semi-skilled workers." (1)

Whatever may have been said in 1921 concerning the right of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board to fix minimum rates for classes of workers already catered for by trade union agreements, and whatever difficulties may have arisen from time to time on the vexed question of scope, the Board still exists, its schedule of rates presents the same appearance except <sup>for</sup> the amounts, and scope is no longer so troublesome. The various branches of the small metal wares trade are still as allied and linked together as they have ever been, but administrative problems are getting less and less in number and in importance. Rulings by the Courts and decisions of the Ministry have increased in number to create precedents, so that when any firm claims that the Trade Board regulations do not apply in their case, inspectors are now in a position to say that such a point has already been decided at some previous date, and that the ruling was or was not in favour of the firm in question for the class of work for which it claims

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(1) Ibid, p. 649.



exemption.<sup>(1)</sup> The definition is still far from perfect, but firms are gradually adapting themselves to the scope of the Board, and on the whole respect the rulings given by inspectors. What still remains a thorny problem is the question of deciding whether a firm is "mainly engaged" on Trade Board or non-Trade Board articles,<sup>(2)</sup> but the tests usually applied are based upon output and time, and inspectors are able to overcome any obstacles that present themselves. Inspection records show that there is now a greater degree of compliance with the Order, and ~~ev~~<sup>as</sup> ~~ision~~ of its obligations ~~is~~ not now so prominent a feature. Much of the evasion and non-compliance was due to misunderstanding with regard to scope, but firms have now grown accustomed to the working of the Trade Board Orders, and there can be little cause at present for professing ignorance as to the true position of the Board in the trade.

This does not mean that inspectors do not discover any cases in which Trade Board rates are not being paid; they still have occasion to inform firms that they are not complying with the Orders and are thus able to obtain arrears of wages for workers who have suffered. There are still cases where two girls may be engaged on similar types of presses in the same establishment, where one is covered by a Trade Board rate and another is not, and this, at times, gives rise to dissatisfaction among such workers, and renders the administration of Trade Board Orders

(1) It must be borne in mind, of course, that such rulings are only legal interpretations of a definition which, in principle may still be wrong.

(2) The question was raised at the Second Public Enquiry, but the Commissioner considered that it was not within his competence to decide the issue. He merely recorded observations on it for the Ministry's consideration.

a trying business. It has been stated above that much of the inspectors' work consists of checking the earnings of pieceworkers in order to discover whether the piecework basis rates are being earned. Usually in cases where it is found that the rate has not been earned, the inspectors' experience is that the fault does not lie with the piecework price, so much as with the operative. It may be that a worker is naturally slow, or it may be that one worker is not careful or thoughtful in the manipulation of the press. Inclination to work, especially among female hands, has an important bearing on piecework earnings. In such cases as this, the inspector, so far from being a detective, may be a useful adviser and guide in suggesting how the work may be better done, or how the work of the shop may be better organised so that work comes along regularly and smoothly. On the whole, there is nothing very scientific about the manner in which piecework prices are fixed; the 1d. or 2d. per gross, as the case may be, is just a matter of custom, or perhaps a matter of guesswork. If one were to suggest to an employer that a particular price should be increased from 1d. to 2d. per gross, he would probably object that he could not afford to do that, but if he were asked why the figure should not be 1½d. or 1¾d. or any other figure, his answer would scarcely give satisfaction.

A further source of trouble is the term "metal small-ware", given in the definition of 1924. There can be no hard

and fast rule by which to decide whether any particular article is a metal smallware or not. It is a matter for determination in each individual case as to whether any class of work may be regarded as a light stamping or a heavy stamping. Generally speaking, the Board aims at protecting the female worker who is usually engaged in producing what may be regarded as light stampings or pressings, but there may easily be smallwares made of heavy metal which require a heavy stamp to fashion them. As the definition says metal smallwares, workers, male or female, engaged on that type of work, must be included. The Coffin Furniture Trade Board has drawn a distinction between heavy hand-press workers and light hand-press workers. The former work is defined as that of "workers employed on hand-press work on any blank the largest diameter of which is 7 inches or over and the thickness of the material of which is  $\frac{48}{1000}$  the of an inch or over." Then light pressworkers are those not included under heavy hand-press work. Heavy hand-press workers are entitled to a higher rate than light hand-press workers. The Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board has not attempted to copy this method of precise demarcation between one class of work and another. As the Coffin Furniture Board bears a resemblance to the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board in several respects, our attention should next be turned to that Board, although it has not had such an interesting history.



(ii)

Coffin Furniture and Cerement-Making Trade Board.

It is plain that there are two sections attaching to this Board but the section dealing with the making of shrouds and other ceremonies does not fall within the scope of the present work and we shall concentrate upon the coffin furniture section only. This is quite a distinct branch of the brass trades, although in a few cases, coffin furniture is produced in conjunction with other brasswares. Brass is only one of the metals used in the trade. There are between twenty and thirty firms on the Trade Board List in the Birmingham area, some of these being interested in both coffin furniture and cerement-making, others confining their operations to one or the other section. There are one or two fairly large firms in the business together with a greater number of comparatively small size. The Minister's Order which marks the origin of the Board was made on October 28th, 1919, and before this date, it could not be said that organisation was strong throughout the trade. In some of the larger works, the Brass and Metal Mechanics Society had made a good deal of progress in recruiting members from among the men, but whatever concessions they were likely to secure or whatever improvement in working conditions was likely to accrue from their activities, such were endangered by the smaller firms in the trade. It was because conditions with regard to wages would be standardised by the application of legally binding rates on all firms that employers in this trade welcomed the advent of the Board.

From the outset, this Board fixed rates for skilled workers. For males, there were rates for dressers, stampers, polishers, and planishers or wheelers, there being three grades for each of these occupations. Grading was arranged on much the same lines as in the brassworkers' Grading Scheme, and since it was done in the first wages order issued by the Board, which became effective from May 26th. 1920<sup>(1)</sup>, it preceded the grading scheme adopted by the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board. In fact, the grading done by the Coffin Furniture Board served as a model for that undertaken subsequently by the other Board. The grading qualifications<sup>(2)</sup> for occupations which are common to both Trade Boards, are much the same except that the words "who undertake" certain classes of work, or their equivalent, have not been supplanted by the words "employed on" certain work. In both grading schedules, a six years' qualification is required before a worker is eligible for Grade II. The four occupations cited above are grouped in two sections, namely, (1) dressers and stampers, and (2) polishers and planishers or wheelers. Higher rates are paid to workers in the second section, the differentials being 1/6 per week for Grade I, 3/- for Grade II and 2/- for Grade III.<sup>(3)</sup> During the first three months of employment in these occupations a man may be employed at 10/- per week less than the prescribed minimum time

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(1) Order U (2)

(2) See Appendix C. 3.

(3) It will be seen that the differences between polishers rates and those of other workmen are not the same as the difference allowed either in the brassworkers' Grading Scheme or in the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board Grading Schedule.

rates, and during the second three months at 5/- per week less. Rates are also fixed for the less skilled work of packing, rough warehousing, despatching and other incidental operations, and these for adult males in the case of such operations are based upon the length of experience in the work on which the workers are employed or on similar work.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus in a schedule of rates for unskilled work based upon experience, provision was made for the fully experienced workers who may have occasion to move from one trade to another in a similar capacity. There are three rates for such unskilled workers: for less than one year's experience, for from one to five years' experience, and for not less than five years' experience, these rates being at the present time 10/6, 7/6 and 4/6 respectively below the Grade I rate for dressers and stampers. Thus an unskilled adult male worker of at least five years' experience is rated at 9/- less than a dresser and stamper of at least six years' experience (i.e. Grade II), and at 12/- less than a Grade II planisher or polisher. For skilled adult males, then, rates are based on age, experience, occupation and qualifications, and for unskilled males, on age and experience only. For youths, under the age of 21 years, the scales of rates are just as elaborate. There are seven age classifications from 15 years and upwards. For the groups 18 to 19, 19 to 20 and 20 to 21 years under the "skilled" categories, an experience qualification is introduced so as to

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(1) The expression "similar work" is to some extent defined. It includes light stamped or pressed metal work as included within the scope of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board, and the following trades: Builders', Cabinet Brass foundry, Electro-Plate and Silver Plate, and other similar trades.



provide three separate rates in each of these age groups. For youths engaged on "unskilled" jobs, there are also seven age grades, an experience classification differing from that arranged for the "skilled" youths being introduced in the groups 19 to 20 and 20 to 21 years. No distinction is made between the minimum rates of wages for youths on "skilled" and "unskilled" work in the age grades between 15 and 18 years of age. Age and experience are intermingled, then, in determining the rates for male workers of less than 21 years.

Rates fixed for female workers by this Board are even more elaborate in scale. If we follow the lines adopted for describing the scales arranged <sup>by</sup> the other Trade Board, <sup>(1)</sup> we may distinguish between four sections:-

- (1) Polishers.
- (2) Heavy hand-press workers; stampers; or blackers (if over 18 years of age),
- (3) Power-press workers; light hand-press workers; lace-cutters; lacquerers; or blackers (if under 18 years of age),
- (4) Packing, warehouse, and despatching hands, and all other female workers in the coffin furniture section of the trade.

For females employed as polishers, experience is the deciding factor, as there are three rates for the first year of employment, <sup>the second and third years of employment,</sup> and for the period after the completion of the three years respectively. A fourth rate provides for those polishers who are further qualified to be able to do roughing and finishing, such workers being entitled to 6/- extra for this qualification. For females employed in the occupations given in section (2), there is likewise no grading by age (apart from the stipulation

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(1) See pages 303-4

with regard to female blackers). Here again, it is experience which counts, although in this case, it is experience "in the class of work in which they are employed" which decides what rate the workers shall be paid. Rates for workers under section (2) are at the moment 1/- per week less than those payable to female polishers; so that stampers are not on a level with polishers as they are in the stamped or pressed metal wares trade. As younger girls enter more fully into occupations given in section (3), minimum rates are dependent upon age, and there are five different age classifications, commencing at "15 years" and ending at "over 21 years". It will be remembered that the highest minimum rate is reached at the age of 18 years in the stamped or pressed metal wares trade. Experience also enters into the scale for workers in the two grades "18 to 21" and "21 and over", so as to give two rates in each grade, the division being between "more than three years' experience in the class of work on which the worker is employed" and "less than three years' experience". Rates fixed for workers in section (3) cannot be so easily compared with rates in other sections already mentioned on account of the difference in method of classifying. In any case, minimum rates are lower in this section. In the fourth section, the grading is done on similar lines to that in the third section, and the rates for females 15 to 18 years of age are identical. But females in the remaining two age grades are rated at 6d. per week less than those in section (3). In short, rates for females are based upon occupation, age, and experience, on different lines from

the grading under the sister Trade Board.

Piecework basis rates for males over 21 years of age were fixed in May 1920 at 10 per cent. above the appropriate minimum time-rates. This figure was varied to  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in the Order of December 1920.<sup>(1)</sup> It remained as such until June 1922,<sup>(2)</sup> when a cost of living sliding scale was adopted for the determination of minimum time rates, and the percentage for the piecework basis rate was made dependent upon the position of the cost of living index number in the sliding scale. This scale had preceded the one arranged by the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board, but there was no correspondence between the two scales, other than in principle. Of course, the idea was bound to be the same in each case, but in the Coffin Furniture scale, the index number limits in the Order of 1922 did not go lower than "75 or below", whereas, it will be remembered that the <sup>other</sup> ~~the~~ Board provided rates under seventeen columns right down to the point when the index number reached unity or under. In the Coffin Furniture Scale, there were only four sets of limits given in four columns between which the cost of living index number must be at any time for the rates stated in the column to be the legal minimum rates.

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(1) Order U (4)

(2) Order U (10)



These limits were:-

Column.	Index Number Limits.	Excess over Column immediately below. For skilled Workers <sup>(1)</sup> over 21 years of age irrespective of grade.
		per week.
Column I.	101 or above.	s. d. 3.11.
" II.	Not less than 88 and not more than 100.	2.11.
" III.	Not less than 76 and not more than 87.	3.11.
" IV.	75 or below.	

This scale was extended in 1924,<sup>(2)</sup> so as to introduce two further columns of rates for which the index number limits were:-

Column.	Index Number Limits.	Excess over Column immediately below. For skilled Workers over 21 years of age irrespective of grade.		
		Grade I.	Grade II.	Grade III
Column IV.	Not less than 63 and not more than 75.	2/6	3/-	3/6
" V.	Not less than 51 and not more than 62.	2/6	3/-	3/6
" VI.	50 or below.	-	-	-

It will be observed that a difference in principle was introduced in these additional columns. The amount of any reduction was not to be the same for workers in all three grades, the higher the grade, the bigger was to be the absolute amount of the reduction of the rate. In contrast to the scale adopted by the other Board, this scale of the Coffin Furniture Board has not been thrown overboard, and variations in the

(1) These figures show what reductions would take effect for skilled males only. It would weary the reader unnecessarily to give the charges for all workers.

(2) Order U (13).

minimum rates may still take place in accordance with the scale. Only for one short period since the plan was formulated has the cost of living index numbers remained below 63, and that was from March to July 1929. The Board decided, however, that no reduction should take place then, even though the scale was still the official guide for adjusting the rates of wages.<sup>(1)</sup> In practice, the scale has meant that only Columns III and IV rates have been needed. For a long time, the index number fluctuated round about the figure of 75, which marked the point of division between Column III and Column IV rates. Thus, from June 1922 to January 1927 the rates have fairly frequently alternated between those in Column III and those in Column IV. The dates when the index number has been either in Column III limits or Column IV limits, are set out below:

Date from which change took effect.	Rates operative.	Cost of Living Index Number appearing in "Labour Gazette" for
July 1922.	Column <del>III</del> . III.	June 1922 - 80.
May 1923.	" <del>III</del> . IV.	April 1923 - 74.
Jan. 1924.	" <del>IV</del> . III.	Dec. 1923 - 77.
May 1924.	" <del>III</del> . IV.	April 1924 - 73.
Nov. 1924.	" <del>IV</del> . III.	Oct. 1924 - 76.
May 1925.	" <del>III</del> . IV.	April 1925 - 75.
Nov. 1925.	" <del>IV</del> . III.	Oct. 1925 - 76.
Feb. 1926.	" <del>III</del> . IV.	Jan. 1926 - 75.
Dec. 1926.	" <del>IV</del> . III.	Nov. 1926 - 79.
Feb. 1927.	" <del>III</del> . IV.	Jan. 1927 - 75.

Nothing could illustrate better than the above record how arbitrary any "cost of living" scale can be during a period when

(1) Therefore no change in rates was necessary when the index number again rose to 63 in August 1929.

there is no continuous and rapid upward or downward movements in retail prices. From 1922 till the end of 1925, the usual seasonal movement in the cost of living index number has been responsible for a change over from one set of rates to another. Whether a workman should thus suffer in the summer months is an extremely debateable point.

These variations also had their effect upon piecework basis rates, since it was laid down that when Column IV rates were the minimum time rates, piecework basis rates must be 12½ per cent. above the appropriate minimum time rate, but that when Column IV rates were operative, the percentage differential should be 15 per cent. Thus, the figure regulating the excess of piecework basis rates over time rates is at present 15 per cent., the same as in the stamped or pressed metal wares trade.<sup>(1)</sup> The above regulation with regard to piecework basis rates does not apply to males under 21 years of age. In their case, the piecework prices must be such as to yield<sup>to</sup> the "ordinary" worker the appropriate minimum time rate; that is, timeworkers and pieceworkers are on the same footing. The piecework basis rate for female workers of 18 years of age and over has, from the commencement, been fixed at the rate 15 per cent. above the minimum time rates, but for pieceworkers of under 18 years of age, there is no minimum rate higher than the time rate.

Having devoted so much space to the description of this cost of living sliding scale, we may conveniently refer to

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(1) See page 312. The percentage is not stated as such, though in the case of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board.



the relationship between the course of wage rates for skilled male workers as fixed for the coffin furniture trade and those governed by trade union agreements in the brass trades.

Although a grading scheme was accepted in the very beginning, the first rates fixed were appreciably lower than the prescribed district rates in the brass trades, the difference amounting to approximately 10/- per week in each grade. In the second Order of December 1920,<sup>(1)</sup> the two sets of rates were brought practically into line, the greatest difference in any rate amounting to 11d. in the case of Grade I Polishers. For the whole of the period in which the brassworkers' rates were falling in accordance with a cost of living sliding scale, that was in 1921 and 1922, the Trade Board rates moved much less slowly and remained at a higher level. There were thirteen changes in the trade union rates,<sup>(2)</sup> only two of which were advances, up to September 1922, while Trade Board rates had been varied twice during the same period. Fairly substantial reductions in Trade Board rates were made in September 1921<sup>(3)</sup> and again in June 1922,<sup>(4)</sup> so that at the latter date the respective rates were:

Occupation and Grade.	Rates Under Trade Union Agreements. per week.	Rates under Coffin Furniture Trade Board. per week.
<u>Dressers &amp; Stampers:-</u>	s. d.	s. d.
Grade I.	59. 5½.	61. 5.
" II.	66. 5½.	68. 11.
" III.	71. 5½.	74. 11.
<u>Polishers.</u>		
Grade I.	59. 5½.	62. 11.
" II.	68. 5½.	71. 11.
" III.	73. 5½.	76. 11.

(1) Order U (4) The actual discussions about these rates would have taken place several months before Dec. 1920, on account of the three months allowed for objections and confirmation after notice of proposal to vary rates.

(2) See pages 266-269. (3) Order U (6) (4) Order U (10)

In September 1922, the brass workers' sliding scale was abandoned, and in the following month, the reduction of 7/10 per week all round had brought the trade union rates again much lower than the Trade Board rates. By that time, the Trade Board had adopted its own sliding scale, but the decline in prices had slackened and fluctuations from month to month were within narrow limits. Hence, even after the advance in trade union rates in April 1924, the Trade Board rates were not overtaken, Column III rates being higher than the union rates. After 1922, it was the turn of Trade Board rates to alter more frequently in their see-saw manner, while the trade union district rates remained stationary for long stretches. So it has come about that the Coffin Furniture Trade Board minimum rates for skilled adult workers are in excess of minimum rates for similar work people as determined by the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board and by collective agreements in the brass trades generally. The Coffin Furniture Trade Board resembles its sister Board in that it has not recognized the existence of a bonus apart from a rate, but it differs from that Board in that it has always stated its rates as weekly rates, whereas the other Board has often favoured the hourly rate. It is of interest to place side by side the three sets of rates, as

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(1) Column III rates. See page

they are at present operative.

WEEKLY MINIMUM RATES FOR SKILLED BRASS DRESSERS,  
FINISHERS, POLISHERS, &c.

Grade.	Collective Agreements. s.d.	Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board. s.d.	Coffin Furniture Trade Board. s.d.
C	55/6 $\frac{1}{2}$	55/6	57/6
D(1)	62/6 $\frac{1}{2}$	62/6	65/-
D(2) Polishers.	64/6 $\frac{1}{2}$	64/6	68/-
E(1)	67/6 $\frac{1}{2}$	67/6	71/-
E(2) Polishers.	69/6 $\frac{1}{2}$	69/6	73/-
Operative from	April 1924	Sept. 1924	Jan. 1927. <sup>(1)</sup>

It has been suggested to the writer that one reason why the Coffin Furniture rates are higher is that the work done is of a better quality; but in view of the great range of products in the brass trades, this generalisation can scarcely be admitted. The fact is that this particular section is an entirely separate trade, and that it can bear a higher rate now that all firms in it are compelled to maintain the Trade Board standards. Employers have raised no complaint that the rates for skilled male workers should be reduced to the level of the general district rates in the brass trades; they are prepared to pay when they know that all competitors must pay. Too much store cannot be placed upon a comparison of rates in this way, because a piecemaker not covered by a Trade Board rate, but employed on work of a kindred nature, may be no worse off than a maker of coffin furniture. The difference in rates does not seem to give rise to any serious trouble as between the coffin furniture trade and other departments of the brass trades

(1) Column IV. Rates. vide p. 361.



Furthermore, it can be pointed out that makers of coffin furniture do not, on the whole, compete with general brass founders,<sup>(1)</sup> and that the maintenance of such higher rates has no special significance so long as the trade can afford to pay them. Sight should not be lost, either, of the fact that these two Trade Boards are chiefly concerned with female workers, and that actually, these rates for skilled male workers do not enter so very much into the picture.<sup>(2)</sup> There are no effective collective agreements for female workers, so that their rates cannot be compared with any trade union district rates. As between the two Trade Boards, though, there are several rates fixed by one Trade Board which do not agree with the rates under the other. The highest minimum rate for a woman polisher under the Coffin Furniture Board is less than the highest minimum rate for work of a similar nature under the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board.

We have brought before the notice of the reader several points of difference between the Orders of the two Boards, and so that the tale may be completed, we should not omit to glance at the conditions laid down for overtime. Here again, curiously enough, altogether different regulations have been made in the coffin furniture trade. It is a fairly complicated overtime schedule. The normal number of hours are declared to be 47 per week, 5 on a Saturday, and 9 on any other

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(1) Coffin furniture manufacturers are not members of the Brass founders' Employers' Association.

(2) The writer endeavoured to obtain an estimate from the authorities of the number of skilled male workers covered by these two Boards, but such was not forthcoming.

day. Work on customary or statutory holidays and on Sundays is overtime. For the purposes of assessing overtime remuneration, pieceworkers are treated differently from timeworkers. For any manner of overtime, whether on Sunday, holiday, or in excess of the normal number of hours, the overtime rates for pieceworkers should be piece rates which yield to the "ordinary" worker at least the piecework basis rate. If there is no piecework basis rate, then the pieceworker is on the same footing as the timeworker; that is, he or she is entitled to double-time for Sunday work, time-and-a-half for customary or statutory holidays and time-and-a-fifth for other overtime. The latter is defined as "time worked in excess of 5 hours on a Saturday", or "time worked in excess of 9 hours on any other day" which is not a Sunday or a holiday. Overtime rates have to be paid for such work even if the total number of hours worked in a week has not exceeded the normal 47 hours. The reader, by comparing these conditions with those given <sup>in Appendix I.</sup> ~~on page~~, will see that there is no correspondence between the two overtime schedules. There is no reason, of course, why the two Boards should have adopted identical rules, but one would have expected, in two trades of this kind, to find at least some measure of correspondence in such a matter. Sufficient has been written, though, to show that coffin-furniture making may be regarded as a separate trade, and that, accordingly, the Trade Board has pursued its way regardless of the other Board "across the way".

(iii)  
~~(iv)~~ Observations.

After having described at such length the work of the two Trade Boards which concern the brass trades, we must search for any effects the Board may have had upon the trades in question, since there may be doubts as to the eligibility and suitability of such trades for inclusion under the Trade Boards Act. One of the outstanding features which calls for comment is the fact that trade union collective agreements exist side by side with Trade Board machinery. This feature, however, does not invalidate the claim for the retention of the Boards. The original intention underlying the establishment of Trade Boards back in 1909 was that such machinery was necessary to combat the evil of "sweating", which is usually the curse associated with trades where small masters run riot in the market and pass on the baneful influence of their competitive struggle to their employees. Although it is difficult to demonstrate conclusively, surely that ground for Trade Board machinery holds good even today in the small metal wares trade of Birmingham and district ! Tucked away down side streets and court-yards and entries are scores of these small masters. They can carry on operations quite successfully with small capital equipment; they can procure their raw materials at the market prices and they can find a market for their wares, which are often of a cheap and shoddy variety, either with the merchants, or by producing "for the trade". Labour cost forms quite a heavy proportion of total cost of production and, in



consequence, it is always the labour supplying element which must suffer most from competition run amok.

Constant references occur throughout these pages to the obstacles that the existence of these small firms has placed in the way of attempts to improve working conditions. The <sup>1</sup>labour supply in such workshops could not be controlled and there was no means of compelling the master to pay a decent rate of wages. The deadlock of 1909 is brought to mind, when the trade union and the larger manufacturers joined forces in making application for a Trade Board in the brass trades. We know not why such request was not granted; it may have been due to the fact that the investigators in the case were never given the opportunity of discovering under what wretched conditions some brassworkers had to eke out an existence; or it may have been that the trade was so complex that the number of its branches and sub-branches and kindred trades rendered the definition of the trade for the purposes of a Trade Board too perilous a task. The same reason for the application for a Trade Board in 1909 ca<sup>n</sup> still be given again. The Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society was a strongly organised body in 1920 and 1921 but it always found that recruiting of members from the smaller workshops was a thankless occupation. In a Trade Board it saw a gleam of hope for workers it could not control itself. Not only was unregulated competition among workers bad for themselves as "sweated" labourers, but these always made conditions less favourable for trade unionists in the

larger establishments. So, generally it may be said that the Trade Boards were welcomed in 1920 (1), even amongst the employers. The latter did not give their support on the grounds that they favoured government interference, neither did they because they were keen on strengthening the idea of solidarity among unorganised workers. They were mainly thinking that Trade Board machinery would be to their advantage in placing a check upon these obscure producers.

The Trade Board has certainly put a check on "sweating" but it is doubtful whether, in so doing, it has brought about a diminution in the number of small firms. There has been a gradual dropping out perhaps and amalgamations may be taking place but not at a sufficiently rapid rate to show a marked effect on the number of firms in the trade. We do not find stamping and pressing work being driven into the larger businesses. Rather, do we see a growing specialisation, where such firms of stampers and piercers are kept going as subsidiaries to other concerns in which some composite product, for the production of which more expensive capital equipment is required, is turned out. As a general rule, these small firms find no use for an employers' association, and they do not respect collective agreements in the trade. So, it can scarcely be claimed that there is adequate machinery for the effective regulation of wages. If in this connection, one refers to the schedule of rates drawn up for women workers in

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(1) In spite of the quotation given in footnote.(3) on page 254.

the engineering trades, the reply is that such schedule has never been accepted by the unions concerned. This schedule of minimum rates was supposed to be operative from January 1st 1923, having been arranged by the local branch of the Engineering and Allied Employers' Federation. It was based upon a cost of living fluctuating factor but actually, where the rates have been enforced, the cost of living sliding scale has not been allowed to operate, since the rates were stabilised at the figures given below. If these rates are put aside by side with the Trade Board rates, it will be seen that they fall short of those. The rates of wages drawn up for women workers in the engineering trades according to this schedule are :- (1)

<u>Age</u>	<u>Rate (originally based on a Cost of Living index number of 84.)</u>	
14	10s. 0.	per week.
15	11s. 8.	" "
16	13s. 4.	" "
17	16s. 8.	" "
18	20s. 0.	" "
19	21s. 4.	" "
20	22s. 8.	" "
21 and over	24s. 0.	" "

In the stamped or pressed metal wares trade, the rate for the least skilled female of over 18 years of age is at present 25s. 5½d. per week. Female polishers and stampers in that trade are entitled under the Trade Board to 24s. 3d. per week after completing 12 months of employment after attaining the age of 18 years. Japanners, lacquerers, braziers, solderers

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(1) For full schedule showing "cost of living" fluctuating factors see Appendix. H.



and dippers of similar standing in the trade get 31s. 4d. per week. If we turn to the coffin furniture trade, a polisher during the first year of employment can claim as much as 26s. a stamper with less than one year's experience, 25s; and similarly a light hand-pressworker over 18 years of age with less than three years' experience, is entitled to 25s. per week. The least skilled female worker over 18 years of age with less than three years' experience in this trade, is rated at 24s. 6d., which is 6d. more than the minimum rate for a female over 21 in the engineering schedule.

This would seem to indicate that the women workers have certainly been protected by these Trade Boards, for without them, employers could take advantage of the ineffective organisation among women workers to impose the lower district rates. Women workers <sup>are</sup> ~~and~~ notoriously poor trade unionists and they need machinery of the Trade Board type. In short, it can be said that the skilled brassworkers have gained by the Trade Boards indirectly as well as directly, in that their voluntary collective agreements stand a far better chance of being preserved. Women workers have gained more than anybody on account of their own inability and disinclination to organise collective action in the workshops. Employers, though they may sometimes be blind to the ~~fact~~, have also stood to gain rather than lose, especially the best type of employer, on account of the check placed on potential "sweating". The larger firms in the coffin furniture trade have fully

recognised the standard<sup>ising</sup> and regularising influence of the Trade Board.

Nevertheless, the last few words must not be greeted with unqualified <sup>e</sup>enthusiasm; even a trade union organiser would not do that, and for a very simple reason. If we take down from the shelf again the Report of the Cave Committee on the working of the Trade Boards Acts (1), we find therein the story of the good employers and the bad and of the fairy-god-mother Trade Boards which watched over the actions of the latter so as to protect the legitimate interests of the former. In addition, one finds another story which goes in the following strain: -"whereas the Trade Boards Act of 1918 intended that where organisation was ill-developed in any trade, so that wages were not effectively regulated, a Trade Board should be established, it has been found that the vast extension of Trade Boards under the Act has stimulated organisation in a number of instances where little or none existed before." (2) Strangely enough, this does not fit in with the experience of Trade Boards in the Birmingham brass trades. Organisation has not been stimulated. This was pointed out when the Cave Committee was amassing evidence. (3) Not only is it a true reflexion as far as women workers are concerned but it also applies to the men. The reason is not far to seek either !

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(1) Cmd. 1645. 1922

(2) Writer's own inverted commas.

(3) Minutes of Evidence. Cave Committee pp 428-429. also p 653.

Imagine the appeal that a printed notice under government seal would have to the average worker. Imagine also what such worker would say to the trade union organiser who endeavoured by cajoling and every other means to gain another member for his Society. Here is the answer in a nutshell: "The Government fix my rate of wages; what use have I for a trade union?" Trade union organisers have met with this experience over and over again, not only in the brass and allied metal trades but, <sup>also</sup> in other trades in which Trade Boards operate. The worker does not realise that the trade union organiser has to attend the Trade Board meetings to look after his interests, just as if there were no Board at all. The big printed notice which must be exhibited in a prominent place in the workshop, gives no indication of this fact to the average worker. Thus, there is a growing feeling in some trade union circles that, in addition to containing the name of the Trade Board secretary, the big printed notices should also give the name of the chairman of the workers' side of the Board. This, in nine cases out of ten, would be a person holding some official position in the union.

After all, one of the main reasons why Trade Boards were established in the reconstruction period was that it was hoped to stimulate organisation to such a pitch that the Trade Board should become unnecessary. Have we changed our minds about the need for stronger organisation of workers and employers? This is rather a vital question. Certainly, the



Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society has not benefited in membership, neither has any progress been made in organising the ever-increasing numbers of women workers in the brass trades. Nevertheless, the trade unionist would be the first to agree that the Trade Board or some such equivalent must be retained as a check on potential "sweating", and as a means of preserving trade union voluntary agreements. In 1920, conditions were favourable to the trade union organisers, but when depression followed, many of the members they had gained soon ceased to pay allegiance to the union. So it is very probable that any impression gained in 1920 and in 1921 as to the effects of Trade Boards on the organisation of the workers was unduly influenced by the wider movements in the fortunes of trades unionism in general; any increase in union membership in a trade for which a Trade Board had been established may have formed merely a part of the general wave-like ebb and flow in trade union membership.

We are informed also that the imposition of Trade Board rates leads to an improvement in productive methods and in industrial organisation, for the backward firms are forced to keep more up-to-date in methods of manufacture. This may plainly have been the case in some trades in which Trade Boards had been set up, notably in the paper-box trade and in the laundry trade, but on the whole it is impossible to estimate how much of this improvement can be traced to ordinary competitive forces and how much to the application of respect-

able rates of wages. Both forces are operating at the same time and in the same direction. If we turn to the stamped or pressed metal wares trade, we witness a gradual change in productive methods; for the power-press is superseding the hand-press. But this has been happening for years, long before the Trade Board came upon the scene. There is nothing, then, to indicate that the Trade Board rates have speeded up this tendency. Ordinary competitive influences would have occasioned as much improvement. The more general use of the power-press in the trade will have some effect on the type of worker attracted, for greater regularity in attendance at the workshop will be expected of the female workers. This may have some influence on the employment of married women in these trades and there are large numbers of these in the metal-working trades. Married women are not often able to attend for the full working period in the day and power-presses or other machine appliances may exert an influence in that, as the employer will require his equipment to be more continuously employed, the services of married women will not be so acceptable. It would be rather a speculation, however, to assert that the Trade Board is responsible for these and any other changes while so many influences are at work. Two different opinions may be given as to whether the Trade Board rates, which have been kept at a higher level than general district rates, have attracted a better class or worker into the trade. There can be no two opinions, though, about the protective

function of the Trade Board; it has (that is, the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Board) undoubtedly served a useful purpose in protecting workers, especially those in the smaller establishments in the brass and allied metal wares trades, where cheap goods of inferior quality and design are produced. It seems incongruous that the women workers at the stamps and presses and those on incidental operations where stamped or pressed wares are concerned, should be given the benefit of Trade Board protection, while the ever-increasing army of women operatives at capstan and turret lathes in the machine shops of brass foundries should be left to make the best bargain they can with the management. (1) If it were ever hoped that eventually the existence of a Trade Board would lead to such a measure of organisation that voluntary trade union agreements would take the place of a Board, then such aspirations have never been realised in the case of the Birmingham metal trades.

(1)

The Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society does not admit women to membership, so that female machine-tool workers on capstan and turret lathes or other semi-automatic machines in the brass-foundries have neither trade union nor Trade Board protection.

In the harness furniture trade at Walsall, women are admitted to membership of the trade union and in the collective agreements in the trade, women capstan lathe operators, screwers and drillers are placed on the same footing as pressworkers.

Similarly, in the lock trade of Willenhall, women may join the Lock and Metal Workers' Union and collective agreements in the trade provide for the machine-hands.



CHAPTER 9.

The Non-Ferrous Metal, Wire and Tube Trade.

CHAPTER 9.THE NON-FERROUS METAL, WIRE AND TUBE TRADE.

So far, attention has been concentrated upon the finishing sections of the brass and copper trades, and we have omitted to give any account of the equally important metal rolling, rod, tube and wire-drawing section, which forms quite a distinct trade. Several indications have been given in the preceding pages that with the gradual extension of the production of stamped or pressed goods and the increased amount of working from brass rods, these heavier sections have assumed a commanding position in the industry. The industries' classification in the 1921 Census does not enable us to make a reliable comparison between the numbers of workpeople employed in Birmingham and District (1) in the "primary" and in the "finishing" processes. The following figures are the best that are available from the Census reports for 1921.

(for list, see next page)

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(1) See Appendix E. for Census definition of "Birmingham and District".

FINISHING OR BRASSFOUNDING.METAL MANUFACTURE ETC.

	<u>No. of</u> <u>work-</u> <u>people</u> (1)		<u>No. of</u> <u>work-</u> <u>people</u> (1)
1. Brass and Copper Alloy Foundries and Cast Metal Finishing	7,756	Rolling Mills and Tube and Pipe Making - Non-Ferrous Metals.	10,591
2. Brass and Yellow Metal (Sheet Goods), Spinning and Finishing:-			
(a) Builders' & Cabinet Makers' Light Brass Goods.	1,880		
(b) Lamps (Not Cycle or Motor) and Lighting Fittings	8,209		
(c) Other Brass Goods	<u>9,301</u>		
Total	<u>27,146</u>	Total	<u>10,591</u>

Considering that some workpeople classified above in the finishing and brassfounding sections may have been employed in what has been termed here the "primary" section, it may be taken that between 35 and 40 per cent of the labour force in the brass and copper trades of Birmingham and District is found in the metal, wire and tube branches.

Firms in these branches find their customers among users of the metal, in sheets, strips or rod form, in the finishing sections, and from amongst a variety of trades

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(1) Inclusive of "Employers and Managers".



requiring brass and copper tubes or brass and copper wire. Except in the case of one or two firms in the locality, there has been no vertical movement in organisation, but it is not easy to account for this fact. It is not that there would be no economy in adding finishing departments to the works, it is just that these two sections have grown up as distinct trades, and are regarded as such, and that the vertical or integrated type of organisation has not been acceptable to firms engaged in the trade. Perhaps also, there is a feeling of respect for another man's business, and this, together with the fact that the knowledge required for engaging in metal manufacture is quite different from that required in the finishing sections where attention to detail and design are all-important, may account to some extent for the division in the trade. There are fewer business concerns in the "heavy" section, only about forty in Birmingham altogether, a striking contrast with the several hundred associated with some branch or other of brass finishing. Thus, unless a firm of metal producers has been engaged for a number of years in manufacturing finished goods also, there is no special inducement for it to set up departments for making finished goods, because in so doing, it would be entering into competition with its own customers. It may there<sup>by</sup> ~~then~~ succeed in taking away the trade of some of its customers, and lose the custom of these as well as that of others. Any gain derived from putting in such extra capital for more varied production would be offset by an equal if not greater amount

of loss from the effect on its own metal production as a result of diminishing custom. In Birmingham then, the two branches of the industry are likely to remain separate. In the "primary" branch of the trade, there is not so much specialisation among firms with regard to product, as in the finishing section, although in both sections alloys other than brass are often worked up in the same establishment as brass. We have seen that in the finishing departments of the brass trades firms may often specialise in the "lighting" branch or in the cabinet branch, or in general stamped brass-wares, but such specialisation is not so usual in the "primary" branch of the trade. There may be one or two firms which specialise in tubes or in the rolling of metal, but the general tendency is rather to carry on rolling as well as tube, and often wire, drawing in the same establishment. All of these start with the casting process, and much the same type of labour is required in the tube-mill, the rolling-mill and the wire-mill. So, there is every reason why specialisation should be exceptional.

A contrast may also be drawn between the type of labour employed in the "heavier" section and that in the "lighter" branches. Whereas the labour force in the latter, until more recent times, has consisted of skilled mechanics and other craftsmen, there is little skilled labour in the rolling and drawing mills, and no great amount of training is needed for a workman to become a competent hand. Perhaps the strip-caster is on a par with the sand-caster engaged on

"common" work in the brassfoundries; but with the introduction of the electric furnace the variable human element is being gradually eliminated and the perfection of the metal will depend more and more upon scientific control and less on the easter's own experience. The head roller and the annealer may be regarded as the most skilled hands, but here again the application of metallurgical science is supplanting the old rule-of-thumb methods under which the work was previously carried out. New methods of production have displaced skilled labour also from the wire-drawing departments, and workmen displaced find difficulty in getting employment again in their own trade. On the whole, then, the brassworker is still more of a craftsman than his fellow metal workers, although less and less in the way of manual dexterity is now required of him also.

Two further contrasts may be drawn between these two sections; one concerns the sub-contracting system, and the other, labour organisation and collective bargaining. Well back in the last century it was quite common for the head-roller or the foreman in the tube mill to take out work on contract for the master and to engage his own labour in getting it done. This might have gone on from week to week until a quarterly "balance" was struck to determine the position of the sub-contractor and the state of his account with the management. It was a convenience to the management because there was no financial responsibility for the workers beyond the contract price with the foreman, and the latter



could be relied upon to get the contract through with a minimum waste of time. But the system passed away at a much earlier date in this branch of the brass trades, and in the larger establishments it never was widely adopted at all. So all the complaints made against the pernicious system as it existed in the brassworking shops were absent from the metal producing works. Just as no very cogent reasons can be advanced for the long survival of the system in the brassfoundries, so, no ready explanation can be given for the earlier disappearance of it from the tube and wire mills. Occasionally, one came across sub-contractors in the trade, but they were a dwindling class, and were exceptional. Whereas in 1900, one might only have been able to count a dozen or so in the mills, it was estimated that there were a thousand at that date in the brassworking trades (1). The masters in the rolling and tube-mills had developed a sense of moral responsibility towards their employees at a much earlier date perhaps, but this is not an explanation. The fact that more training and supervision were required for the lighter manipulative processes could scarcely be sufficient grounds for survival, because a journeyman brassworker may still have been made responsible for this part of the shop routine without also taking the work out on contract. There are no sub-contracting complications, then, in the "primary" branches of the trade.

The investigator approaching the metal trades of

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(1) Arbitration Report, 1900. Fourth Day, p.59.

the district for the first time is struck by a fairly general lack of interest in trade unionism; for the labour organiser is constantly working in an unfavourable atmosphere. Although the brassworkers, through the efforts of one man, have learnt to respect the benefits of organisation, the same cannot be said for workers in the metal producing branch. Herein lies a contrast which makes an account of wages movements in this trade appear much less impressive and inspiring than that already given for brassworkers in the preceding chapters. On the foundation of the National Society of Brassworkers in 1872, workers in the metal and tube sections were eligible for membership, and members were enrolled. But the Society failed in 1872 to obtain the 15 per cent bonus for these classes of workmen, with the result that they seceded from the union. They remained unorganised for several years afterwards, although a few strip-casters associated themselves with the Brassworkers' Society. Nothing was done for these workers in 1889 when trade unionism made rapid strides and when enthusiasm for organisation was at a high pitch. But soon after, in 1894, the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union (now a part of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers) formed a small section for Wire Drawers. Collective bargaining on behalf of these men did not, however reach a high standard.

The years 1893, 1894 and 1895, witnessed the development of the Metallic Bedsteads Industrial Alliance under the sponsorship of Mr. E. J. Smith <sup>(1)</sup>, and many

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(1) See pp. for further treatment of this Alliance.

prominent manufacturers, as well as trade union leaders became attracted to this "new trades combination movement". There was a strong feeling abroad that no combination of employers was likely to receive popular approval unless the workmen were guaranteed a share in any prosperity resulting from the activities of the combined employers. Thus, when similar Industrial Alliances were established in the metal, wire and tube branches of the brass and copper trades, it became imperative to organise the workmen in them. Among the labour leaders who had supported the Alliance principle was W.J.Davis, and it was he who founded the Metal, Wire and Tube Workers' Society in 1896. He also became the first secretary of this union, and took a prominent part in the working of the "circle" Alliances. By this time, several Alliances were functioning on the same lines as that in the bedstead trade; W.J.Davis was closely associated with all of them, and there was therefore some connection between the different Alliances.

The earliest <sup>(1)</sup> of these Alliances in the metal trades was established in the cased tube and stair-rod branch in March 1896 <sup>(2)</sup>. A beginning had been made with organisation of the workers early in that year, when at a meeting held on the 29th January, it was decided to form an association to be

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(1) A similar type of Combination had been formed in the Galvanised Iron Trade in November 1894. See Birmingham District Report - "Labour Gazette" December 1894.

(2) "Labour Gazette", April 1896.



called the National Association of Bedstead and Brazen Tube Makers "with a view to join in a proposed alliance with the Cased Tube Manufacturers' Association" (1). By February 1st, 308 members had been enrolled at Birmingham and a branch had been opened at Wolverhampton. The employers had appointed a committee to draw up a scheme for the proposed alliance, and agreement was reached in March. The scheme was identical with that adopted in the bedstead trade. Members of the employers' association agreed to employ only members of the workmen's association, and the latter were not to work for "any manufacturer who was not a member of the Manufacturers' Association, or was selling his goods at lower prices than those which from time to time were agreed upon". Selling prices were, of course, to be determined by the employers' association, and any alterations in such prices were to be effected in the customary manner by percentage alterations in the discounts allowed to customers off the gross prices. Movements in wages were to be dependent on the variations in percentage trade discounts. For every alteration of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent in discount there was to be an advance or reduction of 5 per cent in a wages bonus. The workmen were to commence with a bonus of 10 per cent. For the avoidance or settlement of disputes a Conciliation Board was to be established, with a chairman from the employers' side and a vice-chairman from the workmen's side. Such disputes as differences over day-work and piece-work rates, or conditions and hours of labour were to be considered

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(1) Ibid. February 1896.

by this Board if not settled in any other way. As is usual with these Boards, it was provided that no strike or lock-out should occur until the matter in dispute had been discussed by the Board. Failing settlement by the Board, the matter was to be referred to arbitration.

The above arrangements applied to a particular section of the trade, almost a separate trade which concerned itself with cased tubes. These were really iron or steel tubes covered with a thin layering of brass, used principally in the bedstead and fender trades. About the same time as negotiations were set on foot in this trade for the establishment of an Alliance, similar discussions were proceeding in the main metal rolling, tube and wire branches. Meetings had taken place in January 1896 between the committee of the Metal Manufacturers' Association and workmen's representatives, and a committee of workmen was appointed to act with the employers' secretary in arranging a scheme for an Alliance. It was out of this latter committee that the Metal, Wire and Tube Workers' Society germinated. It was ascertained in January that about two-thirds of the employers in the trade were prepared to support the project. As an inducement to the men, there was to be a bonus of 10 per cent to begin with, and notwithstanding any alteration in bonus subsequently resulting from variations in selling prices, the men's bonus was never to be reduced to less than 5 per cent. The negotiations had been taking place between the Metal Manufacturers' Association for the employers and the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers and the newly formed National Society of Amalgamated Metal,

Wire and Tube Workers for the men. Agreement was reached, the Alliance took shape, and the men were to receive the 10 per cent bonus from July 10th, 1896. The basic principle of these Alliances was that either side should assist the other in strengthening organisation, the employers by not employing other than union men and the workmen by refusing to work for an employer who was not a party to the Alliance agreement. At the outset some doubt was exhibited as to whether sufficient support would be forthcoming to make the policy of the Alliance effective. Accordingly, it was provided that:

"This bonus (viz. the original 10 per cent) is granted on the understanding that during the month (i.e., from July 10th) in which it is paid, the workmen shall do their utmost to induce any workmen who have not at present identified themselves with the Alliance to do so, and to persuade those employers who are in the same position to join also. Should they fail to do this within the time (one month), all employers who are associated have the right to withdraw the Bonus until this purpose has been accomplished". (1)

Neither of these Alliances survived many years; by the beginning of the twentieth century, several manufacturers had withdrawn, and in spite of the withdrawal of labour in some instances, there had been from the outset employers who would not consent to sacrifice their individuality in any such compact between employers and workmen. Such employers found little difficulty in obtaining non-union men to carry on the work. One dispute arising out of the refusal of an employer to join the Alliance lasted for 77 working days

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(1) Statement in circular issued to employers. Quoted in "Labour Gazette" - July 1896.



at the end of which time the union men had been replaced by others (1). This dispute occurred towards the end of 1898, and involved about 35 workmen. Soon after, a similar type of dispute resulted in about 70 men withdrawing their labour from one firm, but these men were not successful in their efforts to force the employer to join the Alliance, and at the end of 167 working days, the work was being carried on by non-union men (2). These disturbances show that the Alliances were unable to control either all employers or all workmen, and by the year 1901, they had ceased to function. Several variations in Bonus had taken effect in this period, the bonus having reached as high a level as 27½ per cent in the cased tubes and stair-rod trade. But with the subsidence of the little boom of 1900, the bonus suffered periodical reductions until it finally disappeared.

With the withdrawal of the bonus, organisation among the operatives became very weak. Trade unionism had commenced in the wrong way in this trade; there was no spontaneous growth and workmen had only taken to the idea because there was a bonus at the end of it. They soon lost interest in the union when the bonus was withdrawn. The fact that membership was divided between two organisations was also a weakening factor. These two unions did cooperate for the purpose of negotiating with employers, but they also competed

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(1) "Labour Gazette", November 1898; December 1898.

(2) Ibid, January 1899; July 1899.

for membership, and no really effective body was likely to exist in the trade in those circumstances. After the dissolution of the Alliances, there was little collective bargaining for the trade as a whole, and action on behalf of the men took the form of individual intervention in particular works. Piece-work was the preponderant method of earning wages, but there was nothing like uniformity in any branch of the trade; neither were there any recognised minimum rates of wages. In 1913 and 1914, the two unions were giving attention to the question of minimum rates of wages for time-workers, and they had drawn up a long list of rates for every type of worker in the mills, rates ranging from 25/- for the lowest grade of workers to 40/- for the highly skilled wire-drawer. The rates they had in mind, however, were never submitted to employers on account of the outbreak of war, and it was to be another two years before minimum day-work rates were obtained.

Some check on the chaotic conditions in the trade was derived in the minimum rates established in 1916. The main basis rates were:

#### ROLLING-MILL.

Annealer. - Head man.	37/- per week.
Furnace-man (annealer's assistant)	32/- per week.
Head Roller.	35/- per week.
Pickler.	33/- per week.
Shearer.	32/- per week.
Labourers (generally helpers)	30/- per week.

#### TUBE-MILL.

Annealer.	)	Rates as in Rolling-Mill.
Pickler.	)	
Labourers.	)	

TUBE-MILL (continued)

Tube-Drawer - First hand.	35/- per week.
Tube-Drawer - Second hand.	32/- per week.
Sawyer.	35/- per week.
Shoulderer (solid tubes).	32/- per week.
Straightener.	32/- per week.
Closer (Cased and Brazed Tubes)	35/- per week.
Soldered or Brazier (Cased and Brazed Tubes)	35/- per week.
Dresser.	33/- per week.
Turner-up.	32/- per week.

WIRE-DRAWING.

Wire-Drawer.	37/- per week.
Slitter.	32/- per week.

There are no day-work rates for the men in the casting shops, neither has the strip-caster been protected by a minimum piece-work price. When the unions were considering minimum rates in 1913 and 1914, they had in mind a piece price of 11d. per cwt. for the strip-caster and a price of 7d. per ton for the ingot-man. But no such rates have ever been established in the trade. The rates for labourers in the schedule given above are probably a fair reflex of general labourers' rates in the district, but those for the more skilled hands are comparatively low.

These basis rates are still operative in the trade, except that they now apply to 47 hours of work per week, instead of 54, since metal and tube workers also benefited from the reduction in working hours which took effect in most metal and engineering trades in January 1919. At the present time a bonus of 12/- per week must be added to the basis rates in order to arrive at the real minimum time rates. This bonus is a remnant of the war bonuses which accrued to workers in the engineering and foundry trades through the Committee on



Production, the Interim Court of Arbitration and the Industrial Court. The Metal, Wire and Tube Workers' Society was a party to the agreement of February 1917, entered into by various unions in the engineering and foundry trades, whereby applications for wages advances were to be reviewed at intervals of four months (1). Thus, war bonuses followed a similar course to those in the brassworking trades. Prior to the joint engineering agreement of 1917, three advances had been gained by time-workers and two percentage bonuses by piece-workers. These advances were:-

Date.	<u>Time-Workers.</u>		<u>Piece-Workers.</u>
	Skilled.	Unskilled.	
December 1914.	2/- pr. <sup>week</sup> <del>Mr.</del>	1/- per. <sup>week</sup> <del>Mr.</del>	5 per cent.
August 1915.	3/- " "	3/- " "	7½ per cent.
September 1916.	3/- " "	3/- " "	-

Then followed the flat-rate advances to time-workers and piece-workers in the engineering trades, together with the "Churchill" bonus of 12½ per cent on total earnings to time-workers and 7½ per cent to piece-workers. It will be remembered also that the last award (2) of the Industrial Court had granted 6/- to time-workers and 15 per cent to piece-workers, so that the calculation of wages had become extremely complicated, especially for piece-workers. By June 1920, skilled time-workers in the metal, wire and tube trade were entitled to

(1) See Chapter 7. p. 224 et seq.

(2) Award No. 180.

flat-rate advances amounting to 40/6 per week plus  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the total earnings. Unskilled timeworkers were likewise entitled to 39/6 plus  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, and these were the highest figures to which advances had gone, the advances being greater than any basis rate in the trade.

Towards the end of 1920, employers were feeling the effects of slackening demand, and in 1921 several reductions were enforced throughout the engineering trades. First of all, the 6/- to timeworkers and 15 per cent to pieceworkers, which had been gained in 1920, was taken away, in two instalments as it had been gained. The first reduction of 3/- and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent took effect in July 1921, and the second of similar amounts in the following month. Later in the year, arrangements were made for the gradual withdrawal of the "Churchill" bonus. This was not effected, as in the finishing sections of the brass trades by merging the  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent or  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent into the bonus and making the total bonus a uniform figure for all classes of workers. It was done by removing the percentage additions in three stages. Thus, from November 1st, 1921, the percentage additions to total earnings became 8 and  $1\frac{1}{3}$ rd. per cent for timeworkers and 5 per cent for pieceworkers; from December 1st, 4 and  $1\frac{1}{6}$ th. per cent and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent respectively; and from January 1st, 1922, the "Churchill" bonus ceased to operate altogether. These reductions in the metal trades had taken place at the same time as in the general engineering trades, but subsequent reductions preceded those in the engineering trades.

The reductions made in the engineering trades in the

second half of 1922 amounted to 16/6 per week, taken in three equal instalments of 5/6. But the Birmingham metal, wire and tube trades had broken away by separate negotiation before that time, about a month in fact before the changes took effect in the engineering and shipbuilding industries. There were three trade unions (1) catering for the workmen in these negotiations in the metal trades, and employers worked through a special Metal Section of the Engineering and National Employers' Federation. There were three reductions altogether, as in general engineering, but these amounted to 16/- instead of 16/6 as was the case in the engineering trades. This meant that before 1922 had drawn to an end the bonus had been reduced to 10/- per week, both for timeworkers and pieceworkers, and it remained as such until August 1928, when all grades of timeworkers received an advance of 2/- per week in bonus. Pieceworkers did not benefit by this, and they received no equivalent consideration at that date. But pieceworkers had gained something from the association with the engineering unions, for when it was agreed that piecework prices in the engineering industry should be sufficient to yield at least 33 and 1/3rd per cent above the basis rates, the same provision applied to the metal, wire and tube trade. In 1919, the unions had made an endeavour to improve their basis rates, and were anxious to establish three distinctive grades, with rates, which at that date would have been 83/10, 78/2, and 70/4. The employers did not yield in the matter,

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(1) Metal, Wire and Tube Workers' Society; National Union of General and Municipal Workers; and Workers' Union.



so the unions took their claim to the Interim Court of Arbitration. In its award (1) of October 1919, the Court held that a such a difference should be settled by voluntary agreement independently of the Court, inasmuch as the Court did not consider it to be within its competence to decide basis rates. Further negotiations, however, brought no result, except the establishment of the pieceworkers' base rates.

At that time the unions were fairly strong, and in 1920, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers could boast of about 1,500 to 2,000 members in its metal section. But since then, depression in trade and the working of short-time has had its effect, and at the moment organisation is at a low ebb. Actually, there are four unions interested, because some workers in the trade are members of the Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society, and although these four unions act together, collective action is bound to be less complete than if one strong organisation existed. Because the labour side of the industry is not well handled, there is much more freedom for employers and less working to standard. The basis rates, even with the addition of 12/- in bonus are comparatively low, although it must be borne in mind that they are mainly rates for a class of labour which is not highly skilled.

There is no correspondence between piecework prices from one factory and another, not even for the casting of

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(1) Award No. 826.

ingots, which are a much more standardised product than sand-castings in the brassfoundry trades. Prices vary greatly from factory to factory, but within a particular works, all casters would be on the same level. Strip-casters work normally five "turns" per week of 47 hours, and on the average, the caster with his helper, the ingot-man, and the labourer will produce about 36 strips per "turn", the average weight of a brass strip being about 130lbs. The average earnings of a strip-caster amount to about 75/- to 80/- for a full working week, but in the best firms, where piece prices are good, he may easily earn as much as £5.10.0 per week.

Similarly, although the head-roller's minimum time rate with bonus is 47/- per week, the average earnings of such workers range from 60/- to 70/- per week. The labourer's earnings, however, would not on the whole be much in excess of the standard minimum rate of 42/-. Piecework predominates in the trade, but there are various systems of payment by result in operation. Often, men are paid a production bonus on output over a given amount. It is worth repeating that there is nothing approaching uniformity in any section of the trade, and that the basis rates plus bonus give no indication whatsoever of the real earning capacity of any class of workman.

It has already been intimated that differences with regard to wages are considered in conference between a committee of employers in the Metal Section of the Engineering and Allied Employers' Federation and representatives of the union. This is not exactly a formally constituted conciliation

board, although, by virtue of the work it does, it is equivalent to such. It is a rule of the Metal, Wire and Tube Workers' Society that no workman who has a grievance shall leave his place of employment until the matter in dispute is brought to the secretary of the union. If that official cannot arrange a settlement by direct negotiation with the management in the works in question, then it is open to the secretary to take the matter up with this committee. Much more of the personal element enters into discussions of this kind, and judging by the good relations existing on both sides and by the absence of strikes and other stoppages, it would seem that this method of procedure is preferable to a cumbersome wages board. If it is complained against a firm that day work rates for any class of labour are too low, or that piece prices are inadequate, then it is usual, if the matter is brought before the joint committee, for the rates subsisting in this particular firm to be compared with the average rates for the district. If private enquiry of this kind reveals that the firm is paying at too low a rate, then adjustment of the rate is recommended. Negotiations of this kind generally result in satisfactory settlements.

It cannot be said of the metal trade, though, that collective bargaining is strongly entrenched. Employers are fairly well organised, not only through the metal section of the engineering trades' organisations, but also in associations like the Cold Rolled Brass and Copper Association. The latter has purely commercial functions, and looks after the common



commercial and technical interests of its members. It is not concerned with such labour and wages problems as have been considered in these pages. The workmen, on the other hand, are not well organised, and it is highly improbable that they would be able to enforce by strike any demands that might be made by the unions. There are agreements in the trade, not only with regard to basis rates and bonus, but also for regulating overtime conditions and in respect of basis rates for youths under 21 years of age. There has been no single militant body, however, which fact accounts for the absence of wages agitations and arbitrations in these "heavier" metal sections.

No complaints against the existence of "sweating" have ever been levelled at employers in the trade; neither has there been any opportunity for females to replace males. Of the 10,591 persons returned in 1921 as being engaged in these "heavy" branches of the trade, only 918 were females, under 9 per cent; and of these many were clerical workers or warehouse hands. This contrasts strikingly with the distribution of labour between the sexes in the finishing and brass foundry branches, for in these branches no fewer than 10,311 out of the 27,146 were females. The main occupations in the finishing branches were naturally stamp and press work, machine-tool work, polishing, buffing, mopping, and japanning. It might be suspected that any absence of blatant "sweating" has been due to greater equality in size among the productive units. But there is no evidence to support such a view.

Small units exist side by side with large units, the productive capacity of mills varying from a figure of x tons to 10 x tons,

Provided the smaller firms keep up to date in scientific productive methods, there is no reason why they should not be able to continue in existence. Four or five of the larger concerns in the trade have now been enveloped in the Imperial Chemical Industries combine, but they operate as separate entities; and although the general tendency may be towards larger scale units, this will be but a gradual movement, and the smaller firms will not be easily ousted from the trade. In fact, to some extent, a limit is placed on the most economical size by the organisation of the finishing branches. There, the small unit is able to survive, and as such, orders its supplies in small quantities. It is very often the case that the smaller producers in the finishing sections prefer not to deal with the large combine or concern, because they receive less individual and personal attention to their requirements. The bigger concerns supply the larger consumers, while the smaller mills cater for the small consumers. Unless these larger consumers, like the motor trade, existed, then there would be no especial economy attached to the large scale unit.

The above review of wages, labour, organisation and general structure of the "primary" branch of the brass and copper trade of Birmingham is much less imposing than the lengthy account of conditions in the brassworking trades. But the many contrasts are not without interest. One section is

complementary to the other, and there are also points of similarity as well as of contrast. For example, there is a seasonal movement in trade corresponding to that in the finishing branches; for from May to September is generally recognised to be the slackest part of the year. In recent years, although the slump has not affected the trade as much as it has some of our basic industries, there has been a fair amount of short-time working, which has, of course, left its effect on the strength of the trade unions. A workman hesitates to contribute to his union when he is not in receipt of a full week's wage. This would have a much more marked effect in the "primary" branches where there is no tradition to be handed down concerning the struggles of the past. The high percentage of unemployment which is officially recorded for the brass trades, is largely due to the influx of labour during the war and immediately afterwards, and many of those who are unemployed have little prospect of returning to the brass trades either. The big demands made upon the brass trades to supply war-time needs has led to a surplus productive capacity which has not yet been worked off, and this again would be another factor contributing to inactivity in labour ranks. It cannot be said, however, that the brass trade is a depressed industry, and any lack of interest in trade unionism which is manifested in the metal, wire and tube branches can best be ascribed to a wrong spirit in the movement in 1896, the preponderance of unskilled and semi-skilled types of labour, the fact that there has been no single trade union to undertake the duty of organising the workers, and to the absence of any tradition of solidarity in the trade.



CHAPTER 10.

The Metallic Bedsteads Trade.

### The Metallic Bedstead Industry.

The metallic bedstead industry has its home in Birmingham and the surrounding district; it is even more highly localised than the brass and copper industry. Although less important than the brass trade from the view point of the number of work people engaged in it, it presents many interesting features both from the industrial and labour organisation stand-points and is historically deserving of our attention because it was in the metallic bedstead trade that the Industrial Alliance principle took root. Apart from this, however, the trade has sufficient connections with the brass trades to receive consideration in these pages. As a trade, it does not date back for so many years as the brass trades, since it was only in the third decade of the nineteenth century that the metallic bedstead was becoming popular for household use. In fact, we may place the real origin of the trade in the year 1835, when Harlow and Peyton began their experiments in chill-casting, a method of casting in iron stocks for the fitting of the rails instead of casting in sand. These two men entered into (1) partnership about that time, and as a result of their efforts succeeded in speeding up and cheapening production. It was they who laid the foundations of the trade, not only in their application of chill-casting to the trade, but also in their perfection of the dove-tail joint, which superseded the old

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(1) "The Cabinet Maker and Complete House Furnisher"  
January 21st. 1928. "Metallic Bedsteads, No.1."

round joints and rendered the setting-up and taking down of the bedstead a simple procedure, as no nut or cotter was required. The discoveries of these pioneers had added greatly to the possibilities in the trade, for with the supersession of sand-casting for making up the head and foot rails, much of the labour of filing and forging became unnecessary, and more scope was given for the introduction of design in manufacture. When these new methods were first introduced, only about a dozen (1) bedsteads could be produced in a day, but later further improvements in manufacture were made by journeymen in the employ of the pioneer firm. Thus, by 1855, about a hundred bedsteads (2) could be produced in a day. Metallic bedsteads were much cheaper, then, than they had been in 1830, the prices having been reduced by as much as 25 per cent. between that date and 1850. The piece-work prices of the workmen had been reduced (3) in the same period by about 10 per cent. The trade developed steadily after this, for when the patents had expired, journeymen (4) left the firm and set up in business on their own account, so that in the 'sixties somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500 work people were employed <sup>in the industry quite apart from those employed</sup> in the subsidiary branches of tube-making

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(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) "Labour and the Poor". Morning Chronicle, Jan. 6th. 1851.

(4) It is interesting to note that of two of the largest firms at present in the trade, with establishments lying side by side, one has descended from the original firm of Peyton, and the other from Sewell, who was for some time in the employ of Peyton.



(1)

and malleable-iron casting. By this time, further developments in productive methods had been introduced; in the more expensive patterns, malleable iron castings were used in the head and foot rails, brass tubes and ornaments had been added to some patterns, and furthermore, an adaptation of lithographic printing for ornamenting the posts and other parts had been used to add variety and colour.

In the 'sixties and 'seventies then, the metallic bedstead trade was a well established trade in the locality, and it continued to expand until the end of the century, when the dictates of fashion began to contribute to its decline. The trade described as metallic bedstead manufacture is a finishing trade purely and simply, and derives its raw materials very largely from other trades in the district. For example, the manufacture of bedstead mounts has for many years been a separate trade: angle-iron is obtained from the rolling mills; steel tubes, brass tubes and cased-tubes are likewise bought out. Thus, it is an absolute impossibility to determine exactly how many work=people are really interested in the manufacture of the metal bedstead, for steel tube makers do not confine their operations to bedstead tubes; they will make tubes of all kinds for other trades like the cycle trade. Similarly, cased tube makers supply trades other than the bedstead trade, this class of tube often being used in fender-making and in shop-fittings

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(1) "Cabinet Maker" Op.cit. Also Timmins - "Midland Hardware District", p.628. Children's Employment Commission, 3rd. Report. p.144. G.C.Allen. Op.cit. p.

making. Bedstead mounts and fender supports are usually produced in conjunction, as the work required in both is much the same. The sub-division may be taken further if we consider that most bedstead makers also make their wire mattresses, and hence wire has to be bought out as well. The castors and various ornaments may likewise be obtained from specialists for fitting to the finished bedsteads.

Differentiation is the order, then, in the metallic bedsteads trade. The trade has been described as a "synthetic" industry, or in other words, it is mainly an assembling trade, for "few makers find it practicable to produce everything required in the industry from solid-drawn brass tubing and steel angles to bedstead mounts and patent fittings."<sup>(1)</sup> It has been estimated that there are twice as many people engaged in making the raw material, that is, the various parts, as in the industry itself.<sup>(2)</sup> The angle-iron for the frame ends and sides may or may not have been cut into the correct lengths when it reaches the bedstead-making establishment; but the studding and punching is usually done in the latter on powerful and rapidly-worked presses. Sometimes, the bending of tubes, where necessary, is done by the tube-drawing firm, but it may also be done in the bedstead making factory. It must not be assumed that all the bedstead makers purchase the parts for assembling and finishing, as there are some firms which make their own tubes, or mounts, or even both; in which case, the brass-casting shop and the tube-mill would

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(1) "Cabinet Makers etc." August 18th. 1923.

"Metallic Bedsteads, No. 8."

(2) Ibid.

form important parts of the establishment. If only mounts and ornaments are made, the casting-shop would be for sand-casting in small moulds as in the finishing sections of the brass trades, but if brass tubes are produced, the casting shop would be akin to those in the metal, wire and tube branch. There is at least one firm which not only makes brass tubes for use in its own bedstead production, but also engages in the general trade of tube supplying. This only applies to its use of brass tubes, and in fact, it obtains its steel tubing elsewhere. This is an exceptional type of firm which carries on an extensive business in all three sections of the finishing branches of the brass trades as well. It produces water fittings, gas and electric light fittings, motor fittings, as well as general and cabinet brassfoundry. It has, in addition, a part of its works devoted to the production of wooden bedsteads. The wooden bedstead trade has gained at the expense of the metallic bedstead especially in the home trade, and several bedstead firms have turned their attention to wooden bedsteads and produce them in conjunction with metallic bedsteads, although it is a distinct woodworking trade closely allied to cabinet furniture making. Yet another feature of the structure of the bedstead trade is that firms not infrequently broaden the basis of their production by adding other products to their list of manufactures. For instance, there is one firm which makes use of its brass casting shop for more than the production of ornaments and mounts. It carries on quite a good business in electric light fittings, and buys out many of the parts for final assembling. Another firm



has added the manufacture of hearth furniture to its operations. while yet another has built up a reputation for metal-windows. Here the connection is much more obvious, because the setting-up of the metal-windows depends upon a chill-casting process for the joints, as in bedstead manufacture. This is rather a large firm which makes ships' bunks as well as ordinary bedsteads. It also has its own tube mill. Altogether then, the metallic bedsteads trade has developed a curious structure, and the labour force in it is rather varied.

Ignoring for a moment those workers who are concerned with the brasswork part of the trade, we may proceed to enumerate the different classes of workers to be found in bedstead establishments. The most highly skilled hand is the stock-fitter; he has to make certain that the chill-casting stocks are perfect before they are used in the foundry. The stocks are made of cast-iron produced in the ordinary way from a plaster pattern by an iron-moulder. Originally, the design has been worked in a wax pattern before the plaster one emerges. In its rough state, the iron mould - for it is really a mould - goes to the fitting shop, where its faces have to be machined, and where it is tested and accurately fitted. This is the work of the stock-fitter and his assistants, done in a shop which is both a fitting and a machine shop. This part of the bedstead establishment is equivalent to the tool-room in the engineering works; it is almost equal in importance to the designing department under which the patternmaker has to work.

The cast-iron is produced, of course, from pig-iron in

a cupola furnace, and the cupola man has very responsible work to perform. He usually works longer hours than other men in the foundry. Before the casting of the joints is done, the frame-setter must put the rails and tubes in position and fix the stocks for casting. This is not a highly-skilled job, since the frame on which he works guides him in his labour. When the stocks have been fixed, the chill-caster pours the molten metal from his container into the stocks, and in a few moments after pouring, he knocks off the stocks and the joints are made. The ends or sides, as the case may be, have then taken shape, but before being painted, the pieces of metal protruding from the joints after casting must be knocked off. This is done by the chipper, who is usually a young hand; after very little experience with the hammer and chisel, the chipping can be done at a rapid pace. It is not a skilled occupation. The bottom frame is made up from angle-iron by a similar chill-casting process, and as is well-known, the ends fit into this by a dove-tail joint. The painting is done mainly by dipping in big baths, followed by steving for drying purposes. Black is, of course, the most usual colour, but many other colours are used on bedsteads destined for export. Customers in eastern countries prefer highly coloured and decorative bedsteads. But unless the output of these elaborately coloured bedsteads is a large one for each colour, dipping is unprofitable, and they are painted by hand. The dipping and painting is done mainly by women workers, although men do it in some establishments. Recently, the coloured metal bedstead has found favour in the home market.

The main processes in the production of iron bedsteads have now been described, but there are other operations associated with the manufacture. Some of the coloured bedsteads have to undergo polishing before they present a finished appearance, and often artistic designs have to be transferred on to the bedstead to suit the requirements of a particular market and to add variety. Both of these processes afford opportunities for female labour. Where brassware in the form of tubes, mounts or ornaments form parts of the finished article, the brass polishing shop and a lacquering room will be found in a bedstead establishment, with the same type of labour as in the brass trades. Attached to the foundry will be a smith's forge for odd pieces of blacksmith's work, although the amount of smith's work is now practically negligible. The angle-iron may require cutting into lengths and punching, in which case a man will be required to operate the shearing machine and another will look after the punching. In either case, such workman is usually able to set up the machine as well as operate it. Where bending is done, the tube-bender will be one of the most skilled operatives. Then, finally, there are the wrapping and packing operations, which are not such unskilled jobs as might be imagined, for great care has to be taken over the packing of the highly finished patterns, and packing for export purposes has to be performed with a view to the saving of space with a minimum risk of damage in transit.

On the whole, then, there is a big variety in occupation, but there is little highly skilled work, most of it



is either semi-skilled or unskilled. The distribution between males and females engaged in the trade is approximately 70 per males to 30 per females. The numbers engaged in the manufacture of metallic bedsteads and wire mattresses, as returned in the Census of 1921 were:-

NUMBER OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN MANUFACTURE OF  
METALLIC BEDSTEADS. 1921. (1)

	Males.	Females.	Total.
England and Wales.	4229	1854	6083
Birmingham and District.	2757	1154	3911

The Census occupational classification will also enable us to gain some idea of the distribution of this labour force between the different classes of labour. The following figures are <sup>re</sup>produced from the Census returns.

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(1) Industries Report. Census 1921. p.71.

DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPATIONS IN MANUFACTURE OF  
(1)  
METALLIC BELTSTALS. 1921.  
BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT.

OCCUPATION.	MALES.	FEMALES.	TOTAL.
<b>MANAGERIAL:-</b>			
Employers and Managers.	122	-	122
Foremen and Overlookers.	40	4	44
<b>METAL WORKERS:-</b>			
Moulders	116	11	127
Iron Foundry Furnacemen.	33	-	33
" " Labourers.	264	2	266
Brass Foundry Furnacemen & Labourers.	33	-	33
Smiths and Skilled Forge Workers.	56	1	57
Machine Tool Workers.	54	43	97
Fitters.	53	-	53
Brass Finishers.	40	4	44
Glazers, Polishers, Buffers, Hoppers.	173	35	208
Japanners.	7	141	148
Press Workers and Stampers.	13	57	70
Riveters.	29	3	32
Sheet Metal Workers.	28	-	28
Tool Makers.	31	-	31
Tube Drawers and Welders.	26	-	26
Wire " " Makers.	12	1	13
Wire Weavers.	45	124	169
Other skilled Workers.	605	77	682
" Unskilled Workers.	135	80	215
<b>OTHER DEPARTMENTS:-</b>			
Painters.	9	82	91
French Polishers.	4	49	53
Packers.	105	83	188
Woodworkers. (2)	94	1	95
Commercial Travellers.	10	-	10
Clerks.	140	201	341
General Undefined Labourers.	116	3	119
"Other" Occupations. (3)	364	152	516
Totals:	2757	1154	3911

This table of occupations does not enable us to state what proportion of the workers are respectively skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled. In view of the fact that the fitters, toolmakers

- (1) Industries Report, Census 1921. p.71.  
 (2) Includes Cabinet Makers; Carpenters; and Wood Machinists.  
 (3) Includes Bedding Makers.

moulders, furnacemen, and polishers are separately classified, we have to be rather sceptical with regard to the figure of 682 for "Other Skilled Workers". Dividing these other skilled male workers equally between skilled and semi- or unskilled classes, and adding the "general undefined labourers" to the "metal workers' " category, we may make a rough estimate that 40 per cent of the male metal workers in the trade are skilled workers and the remainder semi-skilled or unskilled. (1) Such estimate must be accepted, however, with a good deal of reservation and should not in any way be regarded as an authoritative statement of the true position.

Having submitted a general description of the structure of the trade and of the types of labour engaged in it, we may turn our thoughts to labour organisation and collective bargaining between workmen and employers. There is not as much to relate about this trade as for the brass working trades, but nevertheless, it is a better tale than that given of the metal, wire and tube workers. First of all, it should be remembered that the metallic bedsteads trade is not so old a trade as the many branches of the brass and copper industry; neither has it given employment to so many workers. As we have seen, the trade really began its existence in the 'thirties, although metallic bedsteads were made by other processes before that time. By the middle of the century, there were at least ten makers of metal bedsteads in the Birmingham locality, giving

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(1) That is, skilled or unskilled within the bedstead trade and compared with workers in other metal and general engineering trades.



(1)

employment to about 500 workers, so that, on the whole, the manufacture of metal bedsteads must have been carried on in comparatively large factories. This is substantiated somewhat by the reports of the Children's Employment Commissioner in the 'sixties who, quoting from a report of the Medical Officer of Health to the Privy Council which was drawn up in 1861, shows that the manufacture of metal bedsteads was one of the manufactures which were carried on almost exclusively in "large

(2)

factories". The term "large" must be treated as merely relative to conditions generally obtaining at that date in the Birmingham trades. By the end of the 'eighties the trade had so developed that there were about 40 to 50 firms in the trade. (3)

It is plain then, that by that time, the making of metallic bedsteads was quite an important industry in the Birmingham District, and one would naturally look for some combination for collective action among the workers. But there was no trade union in the trade until the year 1889. Many had

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(1) Figures for number of firms taken from a Birmingham Directory, and quoted in "Labour and the Poor" - Morning Chronicle, January 6th. 1881.

W. J. Davis, in his "Short History of the Brass Trades" (1892) gives the number of firms as 4 or 5 for the year 1849. He probably took as his authority the contribution of Edward Peyton to Timmins' "Midland Hardware District" (1865), where it is stated that in 1849 there were not more than 8 firms established in the trade, of which 4 or 5 were located in Birmingham. By 1865, it is stated that the number had increased to 20.

(2) Children's Employment Commission. 3rd. Report. 1864. p.xiii.

(3) The number is given as 48 for Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the year 1884, by C.J. Woodward in "Manufacturing Industries". British Association Handbook. 1886. Chap.VIII. p.150 et. seq. His authority was Kelly's Directory.

W.J.Davis in his "Short History of the Brass Trades", gives the number of firms in Birmingham at 42 for the year 1892. He also gave the figure for numbers employed in the industry as 7000 for that date, but that estimate was probably an exaggeration.

joined the Brassworkers' Society in 1872, but they soon withdrew their support when the union could not obtain a 15 per cent. bonus for them in that year. Two abortive attempts to organise the men had been made previous to 1889, but that year, which was a good one all round for trade unionism, witnessed the foundation of the Bedstead Workmen's Association.

Workmen in the trade had suffered lamentably from cut-throat competition among their employers. So, in 1888, a certain Walter Mills began to organise meetings of men in the hope that through a union there would be a means of reducing the number of disputes which were everlastingly besetting the trade. This enthusiast was actually an employer himself, a small master in the bedstead trade who had worked his way up from a position in a merchant's business, in which he had commenced when he left school, through managerial posts first in a bell, button and candlestick business and later in a bedstead business, to the position of a bedstead manufacturer himself. In his work for the inauguration of a union he had the support of another employer named Frazer, and later on, after W. J. Davis had given up his factory inspector's post to return to the Brassworkers' Society, that experienced leader also gave a guiding hand. By the end of 1889, the membership had reached 600<sup>(1)</sup>, and Mills had become the first secretary of the Association. Three months

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(1) "Birmingham Gazette." February 26th. 1890. Article 6 on "Trade Unionism in Birmingham." Newspaper Cuttings. Birmingham Reference Library.

before the close of that year a move had been made for a bonus of 15 per cent. on piece rate earnings and day work rates, the same as existed in the brass trades at the time. There always had been a connection between the brass trades and the bedstead trade, and the new organisation in the trade followed the example of the Brassworkers' Society in more ways than one. Many of the rules of the Bedstead Workmen's Association were taken verbatim from the rules of the Brassworkers' Society: (1) for example, those relating to grievances over the pricing of piece-work with the method of procedure, (2) those relating to the employment of underhandmen by journeymen, (2) and later on, those relating to the "stopping" of bonus to make up for arrears of contributions. (2) The journeyman system was prevalent in the bedstead trade in the days when one man was expected to be able with the aid of his "gang" to turn out a complete bedstead. But the system never seems to have given any trouble in the bedstead trade and it passed away at a much earlier date than in the brass trades.

In October 1889, the leaders in this new organisation pressed employers for an advance in wages in the form of a 15 per cent. bonus, but the majority of employers met them with a refusal. Then, at a meeting between representatives of both sides, employers intimated their willingness to grant an interim bonus pending the revision of piecework prices throughout the trade, the suggested interim period being fourteen days. But

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(1) Webb Collection of Trade Union literature.

(2) See Chapter 3 (ii) p. 84 et seq.



the men had set their heart on a bonus and were not attracted by the prospect of improved piece rates. There was a strong feeling in favour of a strike to enforce their demands, as was shown by the voting at a meeting of 58 delegates held on December 1st. At this meeting, there were representatives from every known bedstead factory in Birmingham. The voting revealed that 33 factories were in favour of an immediate strike, 3 were definitely against a cessation of work, and the remainder (1) wavered, only countenancing a stoppage as the very last resort. The young society had consulted W. J. Davis for advice, and he had urged a compromise. He strongly advised the men to take every available means for avoidance of a strike and to accept the employers' offer provided that they were granted the 15 per cent. bonus at the end of the fortnight if the piecework prices had not by that time been revised. After a little persuasion, W. J. Davis succeeded in overcoming the opposition of that section which was advocating an immediate strike, and it was decided to negotiate on those terms. Employers had also shown a willingness to enter into negotiations.

Unfortunately, just when events seemed to be moving in the right direction, those who had clamoured for a strike grew impatient and upset the whole of the negotiations by ceasing work without notice, only two days after it had been decided not to strike. On December 3rd. 2,000 men ceased

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(1) W. A. Dalley. Op.cit. Chapter XIV. pp.147-60. This account of the Bonus agitation is based on the account given by Dalley in that Chapter of the "Life Story of W. J. Davis".

work, and their numbers were swollen to over 3,000 by the next day. Union and non-union men were sticking together in the matter. The employers were incensed by this action, and broke off negotiations. They declared a general lock-out, and stubbornly rejected the idea of a bonus at all, although they were still willing to give attention to a revision of piece-work prices. The agitation had led to the formation of a (1) Bedstead Manufacturers' Association as a defensive measure. The men's action had been unreasonable, due no doubt to the fact that the union was too young to be able to exercise much control over the discipline of its members. Besides acting against their own resolution in the matter, the men had been unconstitutional in leaving work without notice. In any case, the strike threatened to cripple the union with heavy financial burdens right at the outset. Once the men had come out on strike, S. J. Davis, although he had opposed the strike from the beginning, realised that it would be best to stick together. He had suggested arbitration, but the employers would not hear of it. So, the struggle dragged on for over a week, and no way out of the deadlock could be found. Eventually, through the good offices of the Mayor, the employers agreed to submit the dispute to a Court of Enquiry. There were two arbitrators, one for each side, and an umpire. Judge Chalmers was appointed umpire and it was agreed that he should fix an interim bonus pending a final settlement. He fixed this at 10 per cent. The enquiry was continued in January 1900, and the final outcome

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(1) "Birmingham Gazette" - Op.cit. 1908.

was that the men were granted their original demand for a  
 15 per cent bonus. <sup>(1)</sup> Just as the brassworkers had begun  
 their organised existence with an agitation for a bonus of  
 15 per cent., so had the bedstead workers made a start in the  
 same way. No arbitration was necessary in the former case,  
 although it will be remembered that the brassworkers had to  
 threaten employers in one section of the trade with a withdrawal  
 of the casters before the 15 percent was gained all round in  
 1873. The bonus in the bedstead trade was within a few years'  
 time to achieve greater prominence through the Alliance, and  
 was destined to be again the cause of a strike in the first  
 decade of the next century, when it disappeared entirely.

The metallic bedstead trade will be forever remembered  
 as the trade in which the idea of industrial alliances between  
 masters and men originated. As in all the Birmingham trades,  
 competition was exceptionally keen, and profits were kept at a  
 minimum through excessive competition. The incidence of this  
 was invariably upon the workmen in the trade. So serious had  
 become the situation that one man, E. J. Smith, who had worked  
 his way up from workman to manufacturer, devised a scheme for  
 the mitigation of these sources of irritation. He was convinc-  
 ed that not only must many manufacturers be making little or  
 no profit on their operations, but also that there was no need  
 for such a state of affairs. He had come to the conclusion

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(1) Dalley says this was mutually agreed after private inter-  
 views on either side. But the article appearing in the  
 "Birmingham Gazette" (op.cit) states that the umpire  
 awarded the men 15 per cent. on condition that a uniform  
 piece-work price list should be negotiated. No price  
 list ever resulted from this condition.



that price policy had been conducted in a slipshod manner, and that although manufacturers complained that selling prices would not cover costs of production, they could not, by any means within their power determine accurately what were their costs of production. They paid no attention generally to costing and were too often guided in stating their selling prices by the catalogue or market quotations of their rivals. In this way, all engaged in the trade suffered unnecessarily, and Smith was of the opinion that such chaotic conditions could be overcome if all manufacturers were brought to an understanding that they would consider costs of manufacture on a common basis and agree not to sell at a loss. Thus, the Alliance involved a strong combination of employers which would see to it that costs of production were taken out not by individual firms acting independently in the matter, but for the trade as a whole, according to some agreed principles. Cost-taking was to be "an essential part of the duty of a whole trade, large makers and small, each being subject to the same methods, and each being called upon to accept the same results." (1) The method adopted was, of course, the usual accountant's system: cost of materials cost of labour processes, together with a percentage for the general establishment charges. This would, in the normal course of events, be done by any individual manufacturer who took the trouble to ascertain his costs of production, but method

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(1) E.J. Smith. "The New Trades Combination Movement". Papers in 1899 edition contributed by E.A. Addinsell, accountant to the Bedstead Alliance. page 40. 1899 Edition published by Rivington's.

would naturally vary from firm to firm. The essence of costing for the trade as a whole was that all would work on the same lines in arriving at results, and in this way many costs which might be ignored by an individual manufacturer would have to be included in their appropriate place.

Cost of materials would not necessarily be exactly the same for each producer, because some buy at more favourable moments than others and some buy in larger quantities than others. In drawing up a cost schedule for the trade, then, one cost would have to be agreed upon as a basis for arriving at total cost and selling price. The combination of employers would, from the information supplied by the members of it, fix a minimum price to be inserted in the cost schedule for the trade. This, in all probability, would be the price at which the least favourable producers had bought, although this was never stated in any public expositions on the scheme. Actually, it meant that a manufacturer who had been fortunate in buying his materials at cheap rates was enabled to retain his advantage without having it within his power to use this advantage against his competitors through reduced selling prices. To this minimum cost for materials had to be added labour costs for the different processes of manufacture. Here again, there was scope for much variation between manufactory and manufactory, and manufacturers would need to be persuaded to divulge some of those "trade secrets" which they valued so dearly. Actually, it became the experience of the Redstead Alliance that many of these so-called "secrets" existed in the imagination only.

There are factors, such as migration of labour between factories, which tend to make the existence of the various productive processes common knowledge in the trade of the district. Hence, little difficulty was encountered, once members of the Alliance had grown accustomed to these cost schedules, in tabulating the costs of the manufacturing processes. By comparison and experience, this part of the procedure was soon facilitated. The results were evidently considered satisfactory, as may be judged from the following statement made by the accountant to the Alliance:

"I must say that it is my profound conviction that so far a much more accurate and dependable result has been obtained than could possibly have been arrived at by any other method. No matter what may be the experience or ability of any one man, there is no one in business who is altogether independent of the judgement and experience of his competitors." (1)

The author of the Alliance himself referred to the general inability of manufacturers to supply the requisite information on a reliable basis. He wrote:

"Speaking generally, about one third of the members of the trade possess some distinct or trustworthy knowledge of the charges which should be set down for each (i.e. materials and labour). The other two thirds know little or nothing about them, and are dependent upon the minority for the necessary information. Persistent enquiry, however, and a comparison of opinion brings about a satisfactory conclusion." (2)

The drawing up of a cost schedule, then, for any trade was bound to be fraught with difficulty and obstruction, for much uncertainty as to the true position existed even with regard to the direct charges.

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(1) Ibid. p.47.

(2) Ibid. p.22.



Beyond the cost of materials and labour, have to be arrayed a long list of supplementary, dead, establishment, or working expenses, and it was generally found, after preliminary enquiry that no manufacturer had an accurate idea of the percentage which had to be added for these fixed and running costs. There was no reason why any manufacturer's figure should approximate to that of another, but the figures were often found to vary between 5 per cent. and 35 per cent. Often, manufacturers had only vague notions about the items which should be considered, and when a list of such items was presented to them it was invariably discovered that many had been omitted altogether in the original rough estimate. Great interest attaches to the percentage allowance for working expenses, as they were called, since it may be supposed that the percentage would be dependent upon the size and resources of the firms. The experience of the accountant concerned with the Bedstead Alliance was that the conception with regard to such variation resulting from considerations of size and resources was a mere delusion, and that it was surprising how near to 15 per cent. the figure for working expenses came in most cases, whether

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firms were large or small.

When this figure was agreed upon, the way was open to proceed to the determination of profit. But before that was done, allowance had to be made for interest on capital and remuneration for managerial services. These two items were often considered to form a part of profits, but the author of

the Alliance was anxious to make quite clear that they formed separate elements. By bringing manufacturers together to pool their experiences in order that the cost-schedule may be prepared, it was hoped that cut-throat competition would be avoided, and that no firm would tread the road to bankruptcy and drag its rivals in the same direction by selling indiscriminately at a loss. The arrangement of this cost schedule did not mean that the Alliance also fixed a manufacturer's selling prices. He was still given a fairly free hand in fixing his prices provided he did not transgress the rules laid down in the schedule and sold his wares at a loss. We are not told what a fair profit was considered to be, but the originator of the plan always took great pains to point out that the interests of the consumer should not be sacrificed. In articles which appeared in the local press, he wrote: "Combination in trades should only aim at maintaining profits which ought to be maintained without combination at all".<sup>(1)</sup>

Having assured themselves that no member of the trade would under-cut and promote ruinous competition, and that fair profits were to accrue, it was imperative that measures be taken to guarantee that all members of the trade received the benefit of resultant prosperity. Here we are approaching more nearly to the main objects of the present work in treating wages and labour organisation, and we must next consider what measures were adopted for interesting workmen in the affairs of the Alliance. In the first place, it was essential that there

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(1) Reprint (1895) of articles on "New Trades Combination Movement" which appeared in Birmingham Daily Post.  
Published by Cornish Bros.

should be a strongly organised body of workers just as it was necessary to build the foundations of the plan on an employers' organisation. The masters gave full recognition to the union, and agreed to refrain from employing any workman who was not a member of it. The men's union served as a lever to compel desisting manufacturers to join the Alliance, since union men agreed not to work for a non-associated employer.

To obtain the wholehearted support of the workmen, some inducement was given them in the shape of a bonus to operate immediately the first cost-schedule had been reviewed and selling prices considered generally. At the date of the signing of the Alliance, the existing conditions of wages, and hours and conditions of labour were recognized, and these were to remain in force so long as the Alliance existed. The very first bonus granted was not to be interfered with during the existence of the compact, but any subsequent bonuses were to move upwards or downwards on a sliding scale according to the movements determined for selling prices. In the bedstead trade, no special condition was attached to the first bonus given in 1893, other than the usual one that such was to be regarded as a fixture. But later on, when similar alliances were established in other trades, it was usual to make the payment of the original bonus conditional upon the obtaining of a sufficient measure of support from members in the trade. Variations in bonus were dependent upon changes in selling prices; for every increase of so much percent. in the latter, there was to be a certain per centage addition to the bonus, and vice versa in the case of a decrease in selling prices.



Every decision to vary the bonus rested with a Wages and Conciliation Board, which also had some voice in alteration of selling prices. This Board was framed on the usual lines with respect to equal representation of employers and employees and dealt with disputes if such could not be settled by negotiation in the works. There was provision for the calling in of an arbitrator in case of dead-lock. Questions of hours and conditions of labour might well be brought before the Board, but no aggrieved workman was to leave his place of employment until the matter in dispute had been considered by the Board. The employers were to have full control over the management of their own works, and the Board had no jurisdiction over an employer, who was to be allowed to manage his business in his own way without any interference. "Expenses incurred in consequence of any decision of the Board were to be defrayed by equal contributions from either side."

The whole scheme, then, was a comprehensive one. It provided for organisation of both men and masters, and it formulated a policy through which the decisions of an alliance of these two organisations may be generally recognized and put into force. It did not provide for an firm minimum selling prices, although it did arrange for percentage alterations in selling prices to apply simultaneously in the quotations of all members of the trade. No minimum rates of wages were established, neither was there any uniformity introduced in a piecework price list for the whole trade. The Bedstead

Alliance was never able to agree upon such a list, because prices varied so much between factory and factory, and the men always required minimum piecework prices to be based on the highest obtaining in the trade. There was no innovation at all in the Wages and Conciliation Board as such. The scheme did provide the machinery through which its decisions were to be enforced, and also a sort of detective organisation to prevent any evasion of the obligations laid upon members of the Alliance. Levies were imposed upon manufacturers, on the basis of number of workpeople employed, to provide the funds for carrying on the Alliance. In addition, a guarantee ~~sum~~ was payable by each member on entry, or a proportion of it on account. In this way, a fighting fund was built up, by which opposition could be combatted. The funds of the Alliance could also be used for furthering the technical interests of the members and for taking steps to overcome foreign competition. It was hoped, also, that the Alliance would be able to get sufficient support from firms which supplied materials to any recalcitrant manufacturer to prevent this man from carrying on his business to the detriment of the Alliance. Whenever men came out on strike against a manufacturer who refused to join the Alliance or who seceded from the Alliance, they were maintained by the funds of the Alliance.

Such were the general features of this new combination (1) idea as it was applied to the bedstead trade in the year 1893,

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(1) Macrosty, in his "Trust Movement in British Industry" gives the date as 1891, but there is no doubt that the Bedstead Alliance had its origin in 1893.

and afterwards to several other trades, including non-ferrous metal rolling, cased-tube making, coffin furniture making, and bedstead and fender mounts trades. There was no connection between the last named alliance and the metallic bedstead (1) alliance. It will be recalled that the manufacture of bedstead mounts either by spinning or stamping was a distinct trade, really a branch of the brass trades. The first bonus on wages in the metallic bedstead trade was granted from November 11th. 1893, when the 15 per cent. already paid in the trade under the settlement of 1890, was increased to 20 per cent. It was two years before any further addition was made, when the figure was raised to 25 per cent. During those two years conditions of trade had not been all that could be desired. When the alliance first began to operate, bedstead makers were fairly active and employment was good. But towards the end of the year, business fell off somewhat, and it remained slack throughout 1894, and short-time working was the rule. Men were also out of employment for longer periods. Many people alleged that this was due to the existence of the Alliance, but perhaps it is more correct to say that the bedstead trade was suffering from the general inactivity experienced by most trades in the district at that date. There was some sign of improvement towards the end of 1894, and a few men are reported to have been working overtime. But at the same time, about (2) half the men were on short time and 50 were definitely unemployed

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(1) "Birmingham Post" - November 2nd. 1896. Correspondence.

(2) "Labour Gazette". December 1894. Birmingham Monthly Report.



Curiously enough, in spite of the fact that demand was not at a high enough level to keep firms working at full capacity, the new alliance held together and all firms are reported to have joined it. (1) Conditions of employment were most indifferent in the first half of 1895 but by the middle of the year the trade was "busy in all branches". A vast improvement was recorded after that, for at the end of the year, a thousand men are reported to have been working overtime. (2) These conditions explain why the second 5 per cent addition to bonus was not granted until November 1895, when nearly 3,000 workers benefited from the advance. The bedstead trade shared in the spurt in trade in 1896, when the barometer for general prices showed an upward tendency but on the whole, ~~the~~ ~~year~~ 1896 was not a busy year and notwithstanding the existence of the Alliance, employment was not altogether regular. Overtime was worked at some factories towards the middle of the year but there were always some unemployed workmen on the books of the union and short time was worked in some cases. The year 1897 was a much better one and by the middle of that year business was good. There was a distinct seasonal movement in the years 1896, 1897 and 1898, for the trade was usually reported to have been busy, with employment "good" from May to September, and quieter in the late autumn and early winter. Short-time working was thus necessary at such slack periods. The year 1899 started badly but the outlook was altered by the

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(1) Ibid. August 1894 and February 1895.

(2) Ibid. January 1896.

approach of the active season. In this year, there was no decline in the later months and conditions of trade and of employment continued to be favourable into the early part of 1900. By this time, the bonus to workmen had been raised, in two stages, to 35 per cent, the second advance occurring in August 1899. Naturally, the fluctuating fortunes of the bedstead makers would have their counterpart in the affairs of the complementary bedstead mount trade, for which business was reasonably good during these years. The workmen in this trade received bonuses in 1896 but these bonuses were not connected with those in the bedstead trade proper, neither did workmen gain so much <sup>in percentage</sup> bonus as their fellow bedstead makers.

The highest point to which the men's bonus attained in the metallic bedstead trade was 40 per cent, the increase from 35 to 40 percent taking effect in March, 1900. The advance, which of course followed an upward revision of manufacturers' selling prices, marked the turning point in the fortunes of the metallic bedstead trade. The apex had been reached, prosperity was at an end and the bedstead trade had entered upon a period of stagnation. The Alliance had to order drastic marking down of selling prices and in less than six months after the bonus had been raised to 40 per cent, it suffered a big reduction at one stroke, in August, to 25 percent.

By this time, the Alliance was beginning to lose control over manufacturers in the trade and in 1900, three very prominent firms had seceded, two in Birmingham and one in Manchester. The competition of these firms threatened to

undermine the whole fabric of the organisation, not only from a moral but also from a financial point of view. The maintenance of the workmen on strike placed a heavy burden upon the resources of the Alliance and it is therefore not surprising that this much-vaunted institution met its demise in 1901, after having survived for eight years. The Alliance had been born during a slack period and its immediate duty had been the eradication of cut-throat competition. In this, it had undoubtedly succeeded in its early years and when general prices were on the up-grade after 1896, bedstead prices and with them the wages of the operatives, rose under the mandate of the Alliance. Many observers had watched the experiment with keen interest, Smith himself often being blessed for his salvation of the bedstead trade. It certainly seemed on the surface that both manufacturers and workmen had derived much good from the plan; but there were many less satisfactory features, not the least of which was the coercion exercised by the Alliance over employers who would not fall into line. The activities of the Alliance in this direction were hidden from the public gaze and little information is available regarding the tactics employed. The agents of the Alliance were for ever on the alert to detect breaches of agreement on the part of manufacturers who were sometimes tempted to circumvent their obligations by means of double discounts, false invoices, cash commissions and similar misrepresentations. No stone was left unturned in endeavours to sift rumours about



such practices. Occasionally, appeal was made to public sentiment through the medium of the newspaper columns when any manufacturer held aloof from the Alliance. Then, we are given glimpses of the hopelessness of such a man's task when operating against the powerful combination. Steps were taken to withhold materials from him and non-union workmen were so scarce that an adequate and efficient labour supply was not to be obtained. A manufacturer was compelled to join forces with the Alliance if he wished to preserve his business at all, even though he was in disagreement with its aims and constitution. There was perhaps less difficulty in persuading hesitant manufacturers in the bedstead trade, than in the sister bedstead mount trade, where the size of the business unit was much smaller. The coming of an alliance had stimulated organisation in this trade, and throughout 1896, there were constant stoppages at establishments where the firm had refused to pay the recognised trade bonus. Afterwards, when an alliance had been definitely established, men were constantly being withdrawn from the works of employers who refused to participate. There were never more than thirty workmen involved at any one factory because firms were so much smaller. These stoppages became fairly frequent occurrences and the Alliance was usually able to enforce its will in 1897 and 1898. But the influence of this smaller alliance grew weaker and weaker. In 1899, its hold over the trade had so far relaxed that employers were able to flout its authority and carry on operations with non-union labour. The

new century opened, then, with no prospect for the continued success of any of the alliances in the metal trades and in 1901, they all ceased to function.

There never had been wholehearted acceptance of the principles underlying the scheme. One by one employers broke away, and the secession of the Manchester firm dealt a death-blow to the whole organisation. Employers were not prepared to sink their individuality for long, and were not going to tolerate for long a state of affairs in which the workmen were virtually made arbitrators between one employer and another. There is no doubt that the prices of bedsteads were increased during the life of the Alliance; that is evidenced by the increases in workmen's bonus. One authority stated that the prices of bedsteads had been doubled between 1891 and 1899. (1) The following figures, supplied to the writer by a Birmingham merchant house, likewise give evidence of the upward movement in prices. They refer to actual book entries in the accounts of this merchanting firm for the purchase price of a standard quality of bedstead for export purposes. The pattern and the supplying manufacturer~~s~~ were identical throughout the period concerned:-

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(1) H. W. Macrosty. Short reference to the Alliance in "British Industries". Ed. W. J. Ashley. p 202.

<u>Date.</u>	<u>Price of Bedstead.</u>	
August 1891.	38s.0.	less 4 % trade discount.
December 1892.		ditto.
January 1893		ditto
December 1893.		ditto.
July 1894.	38s.6.	less 40 % trade discount.
November 1894.	38s.6.	less 37½% trade discount.
February 1895.		ditto.
August 1895.		ditto.
February 1896.	39s.0.	less 37½% " "
October 1896.		ditto.
September 1897.	38s.6.	less 37½% " " + 10%
October 1898 to)		
January 1900	38s.6.	less 31½% " " + 10%
December 1900	38s.6.	less 17½% " "

There is, in this record, a distinct upward trend after 1893. It does not follow from these figures, of course, that all qualities of bedsteads were subject to the same variations. Again, it must be recognised that general prices were rising after 1896, and that with the resulting increase in the cost of raw materials, the price of bedsteads would have followed an upward movement in any case, had there been no Alliance. The year 1900 was a good year, as well, for the general trade of the district. The fact that the cost of materials might increase was one factor which in time revealed a weakness in the plan. If the prices of materials increased, then an adjustment had to be effected in the cost-schedule and the Alliance would find it necessary to review the desirability of a general advance in selling prices. If selling prices were advanced on this ground by a certain percentage figure, the bonus on earnings of workmen would undergo an increase as well.



The market was expected to bear a double charge, whereas in the normal course of events, it would only have suffered from one. There was bound, sooner or later, to be a point at which the demand was not sufficiently inelastic to tolerate a further advance in selling prices. We are informed that the Alliance could be held responsible for an increase in the number of firms in the trade. (1). As the prices of bedsteads would have risen in any case during those years, the Alliance cannot be held responsible, solely, for that movement. The Alliance, however, did much more than bring new firms into the metallic bedstead trade; it actually excited competition in another direction, for people turned their attention to wooden bedsteads once again. The metallic bedstead industry has never since then been able to throw off this competition. It is suffering more than ever from it at the present time.

The economist is tempted to ask many questions concerning these alliances, as Ashley did in 1900. He asked three very pertinent ones: (2)

"Will not Mr. Smith tell us what is the 'fair interest' which must, in his scheme, be reckoned among costs of production? Will he not tell us how he reckons the 'wages of management' which are similarly counted in? Will he not say what is the profit the Alliance adds to the production cost of each article?"

Ashley was also concerned about the freedom of entry into the trade. He was anxious to know the exact financial conditions

- (1) H. W. Macroesty. "Trust Movement in British Industry". p 79  
The number of firms is given as 40 in 1891 and /et seq  
56 in 1900.
- (2) Ashley. "Surveys, Historic and Economic" p 398.

of membership of the Alliance. In the ordinary course of events, under competitive influences, high profits in any trade are supposed to attract new men of enterprise to try their hand. In this way, the consumer feels secure. That is why, more than passing interest attached to the Alliance principle. The need for accurate costing by manufacturers cannot be disputed but the taking of costs for the whole trade on the lines adopted by the Alliance was fraught with danger. Every manufacturer was to be guaranteed a profit, which meant that the figures of the cost-schedule would tend to be based on the results achieved by the least efficient producers. The marginal firm was guaranteed an existence; an entirely un-economic situation ! We are informed, however, that during the life of the Alliance, the average profits were at the rate of 7 per cent, so that profits were not high, if prices were. (1).

The dissolution of the Alliance did not result in a disbandment of the respective organisations, although their influence was less felt in the trade. The men's bonus did not disappear in 1901. although it was reduced to 20 per cent in March and to 15 per cent at the end of June. All of the bonuses granted under the Alliance machinery had been taken off and there remained the original 15 per cent which the men had gained after their strike at the close of 1889. The workmen understood that this bonus was a fixture and that no further reductions in wages could take effect. After the break up of the compact, the metallic bedsteads trade never really regained

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(1) H. W. Macrobert. In "British Industries" Ed. Ashley.

its footing of former years, and workmen could look for little improvement in their position. Trade was moderately good in 1902 and for some part of 1903, but towards the close of 1903 conditions became worse again. For the whole of 1904 and for the greater part of 1905, conditions were no better, and the men's organisation became weaker and weaker. A further attempt on the part of the employers to form a combination for the purpose of regulating selling prices met with no success, because the manufacturers could not agree upon a uniform list of prices. This was towards the end of 1905. The trade remained in the doldrums and competition for orders in a restricted market ran riot once again. Early in 1906, an attack was launched against the bonus, and the men had to yield to a further reduction, the bonus being put down to half at 7½ per cent. The men had resented this, but were not strong enough to maintain opposition. When another year had passed, they were faced with further trouble, for towards the end of 1908, the employers signified their intention to cease payment of a bonus altogether. This time the union put up a fight, and over a thousand men came out on strike. It had been a blow to have their bonus curtailed one half, but to see it removed altogether was more than the men could bear. The bonus to them was a fixture, and there was little chance of ever being able to regain it once it had been lost. The strike lasted for practically the whole of January 1909, but the union

(1) H.W.Macrosty. "Trust Movement &c." p.81.

(2) "Birmingham Gazette", Feb. 20th. 1908. "Trade Unionism in Birmingham, No.8." Newspaper Cuttings.



was much too weak to resist for long, their funds were soon exhausted, for they had been called upon to meet heavy payments to their unemployed members even before this disturbance, and they had to submit without earning any sort of compromise. The dispute practically crippled the union. There was now no bonus, there never had been any protection in the way of uniform piecework prices for the pieceworkers, there were no recognized minimum rates of wages, and the trade outlook was most gloomy indeed.

Following this disaster, there was considerable unrest in the bedstead factories; there might have been no trade union at all, for although the men's association intervened where it could, an employer was free to make his own bargain with each individual employee. Relations between both sides were far from amicable. In 1912, a move was made to remedy this state of affairs. Many firms had been driven out of business as a result of reckless competition and severe price-cutting, and in February 1912 a combination of manufacturers was successfully  
(1) launched. The scheme was framed on altogether different lines from the Alliance, being in effect a cartel. Business was to be pooled, and distributed among members according to percentage quotas based on past output. There were compensations if the production quota was not reached, and penalties if it were  
(2) exceeded. Minimum selling prices were to be fixed so as to yield a fair margin of profit. Very heavy deposits were required from contracting firms, and these were liable to

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(1) "Birmingham Daily Post", July 11th. 1912.

(2) G. C. Allen. Op.cit. p.366.

forfeiture in the event of a breach of the agreement. The Federation acted on occasions as a buying and selling agency, and in addition established a federated workshop for making standard tools and patterns. It was hoped that designs may be standardised and costs of production reduced. An organisation of this nature was but to be expected after such a long period of cut-throat competition and unprofitable prices.

As a corollary to the formation of this employers' combine, the masters concluded an agreement with the trade union with regard to a Conciliation Board. There had been no such Board in existence after the Alliance had fallen to pieces in 1901, so it was hoped that labour conditions might also be regularised and made more uniform throughout the trade. On this occasion, there was no "offensive and defensive compact" between both sides, such as in the days of the Alliance, and there was no discrimination between union and non-union labour. The majority of manufacturers were members of the employers' federation, but there were still non-associated firms. The latter, however, did not threaten the smooth working of conciliation machinery, although they might easily upset the combine. The Board was to consist of seven representatives of the Bedstead Manufacturers' Federation, and seven of the Bedstead Workers' Association, with a provision that one other might be added. Actually, in a few years' time, as the employers' federation became less important, employers representing non-associated firms took part in the proceedings of the Board.

between There was a definite stipulation in the rules that:

"No Employer shall make it a condition of employment that any of his employees shall not belong to the Bedstead Workers' Association, and no Employee shall be prejudiced by being in or out of the Bedstead Workers' Association."

Another rule stated that the trade union did "not object to Female Labour as it existed on the formation of this Board (July 9th. 1912)." The remainder of the rules were much the same as for all such Boards. The objects of the Board were the amicable settlement of disputes concerning "day wages, piecework prices and the hours and conditions of labour". First of all, attempts were to be made to settle any difference in the works between the aggrieved worker and the management; then, failing settlement in that manner, the aid of the trade union officials was to be sought. If agreement did not result from these negotiations, the matter could be referred to the Board. In the event of no settlement of any issue by the Board, the matter was to be referred to the Board of Trade to be dealt with under the Conciliation Act of 1896. A workman was not to leave his place of employment on account of a dispute over his wages or his conditions of labour until the matter in dispute had been brought before the Board; neither was an employer to lock out any workman in the same circumstances.

The Conciliation Board has remained in existence ever since, although its rules have been amended slightly. The Board was undoubtedly a useful instrument, but collective bargaining was not going to proceed nearly so far as in other trades in the district. Piecework prices varied greatly,



between factory and factory, and no uniform piecework price list was going to materialise until several years had elapsed. There were no such features as minimum day work rates either. Two years after the formation of this Board, the war was to change the situation, and soon after the struggle, collective bargaining was to emerge as an established practice and was to achieve its greatest success in the establishment of minimum piecework prices for all branches of the trade.

The metallic bedstead trade had not shared in the steady prosperity of the 1912 and 1913 pre-war upward trend, although the Federation had succeeded in raising the prices of bedsteads by 10 per cent. up to 1914; <sup>but</sup> it had remained as slack as ever and a declining trade. The falling off had been most marked in the case of brass bedsteads, as fashions had changed and the ornate brass bedstead was a thing of the past. The war did not produce an immediate effect on demands, but government contracts came along later to ease the situation. During the war, the prices of bedsteads moved upwards in line with other prices, and advances in wages were made to workmen from time to time. These were secured by the union in negotiation with employers through the Conciliation Board. The Bedstead Workers' Association had no connection with the 1917 agreement in the engineering trades, and, in consequence, advances in wages in the bedstead trade did not correspond to those in the general engineering and metal trades. The first advance was a percentage addition to earnings, a 10 per cent. gained in April 1915, but all other advances were flat-rate

additions. These had amounted to 20/6 per week for males of over 18 years of age, by the end of 1919, and to 6/3 for youths and boys of under 18 years. In December 1919, these were further advanced to 24/- and 8/- respectively.

At this time the Conciliation Board was considering another means of adjusting the bonus and it was agreed that from January 1920, increases or decreases in this flat-rate bonus should be subject to increases or decreases in the official "cost of living" index number. The scheme of such a sliding scale was adopted at an earlier date in this trade than in others. In fact, it was not only regulating changes in bonus while prices were falling in 1921, but also while prices were still rising in 1920. The scale was that for every variation of 10 points in the index number, there should be a rise or fall, as might arise, of 2/- per week in the flat-rate bonus. That was for males of over 18 years of age; there was a corresponding scale for other workers. The datum point was the index number of 125 (above July 1914) which was given in the "Labour Gazette" for January 1920. That figure corresponded to a bonus of 24/- per week, <sup>at</sup> which <sup>it</sup> remained ~~at~~ ~~each figure~~ for five months. The bonus mounted up gradually in accordance with this scale until it reached its maximum figure of 32/-, in December 1920, at which figure it remained for 3 months before commencing its downward movement in 1921. One special feature of this sliding scale deserves mention, namely that an immediate variation in the index number beyond a 10 points limit did not necessarily produce an immediate

variation in the bonus. Variation in bonus was conditional upon such variation in the index number being maintained for two months. That is, if the index fell from 125 to 114 between one month and another, there would be no decrease in bonus unless the index number in the succeeding month still stood at 114 or less. This provision was inserted to guard against irritating fluctuations. These sliding scale variations only applied to the flat-rate bonus. The original 10% bonus gained in 1915 was still payable, so that a workman's total rate of wages was composed of rate plus 10 per cent. plus flat-rate bonus as determined by the position of the index number.

The year 1920 also witnessed the establishment of minimum time rates of wages for male workers, another instance that the methods of true collective bargaining were then operating satisfactorily as a result of war-time experience. These minimum daywork rates were operative from March 13th. 1920, and were for the various classes of worker:

Cupola Men (56 hours)	per hour $1/3$ ;	70/-	per week.
Frame setters (48 hours)	" $1/4$ ;	64/-	" "
Stock Fitter in Charge (48 hours)		85/-	" "
Stock Fitter, second hand, competent to fit all classes of stocks. (48 hrs)		70/-	" "
Stock Fitter, improver, not less than 3 years' experience. (48 hours)		30/-	" "
Cutting-off.	per hour $1/1\frac{1}{2}$ ;	54/-	" "
Bending.	" " $1/3$ ;	6/-	" "
Day Rates for all. other Sections.	" " $1/1\frac{1}{2}$ ;	54/-	" "

These were the basis rates to which bonus was added to arrive at the daywork rates. For instance, in December 1920, a first-hand stock-fitter would be entitled to 85/- plus 8/6 plus 32/-



per week, a total rate of 125/6. This was higher than that fixed for a daywork "fine" caster in the brass trades, whose rate at the same date was 60/- plus 37/6 plus  $\frac{1}{8}$  of 97/6, that is 109/8 per week.

A full comparison of the bedstead workers' rates as they were at the end of 1920, with the full list of brassworkers rates shows that the bedstead makers were in a good position. In the following table the two sets of rates are placed side by side.

BEDSTEAD WORKERS.

per week.

s.d.

Stock Fitter (1) 125/6

" " (2) 109/-

(improver) 62/-

Cupola Man. 109/-

Frame Setter. 102/5

Bending. 98/-

Cutting-off. 91/5

All other adults. 91/5

BRASSWORKERS.

per week.

s.d.

FINISHERS & DRESSERS:-

Grade E(1) 93/11

" D(1) 88/4

" C 80/5

POLISHERS.

Grade E(2) 96/11

" D(2) 90/7

CASTING SHOP.

Principle Hand ("Fine") 109/8

" ("Ordinary") 102/11

Moulder. 89/5

Getter-down. 81/7

Thus, the bender was rated at a higher level than the expert brass polisher, the least skilled bedstead worker at more than the moulder in the brass-casting shop, the frame-setter at more than the highly skilled turner and screwer. These comparisons do not, of course, indicate that the bedstead workman was earning more in a week, on an average, than the brassworker. What it does show is that the bedstead worker had made best use of war-time experience, and that he had emerged in 1920 in as strong a position as other older unionists in spite of the poor record attaching to his name before 1914. The bedstead worker

had not gained as much in bonus as brassworkers and engineers because he did not get the "Churchill" bonus of 12½ per cent., but what he had lacked in bonus, he had made up in rate. His hours of labour were also comparable, being 48 per week for all workers except cupola men, who were compensated for their longer hours in a higher rate. These hours of labour were agreed upon when the basis rates were established. Previously there had been no such agreement concerning the normal number of hours of labour.

That organised collective bargaining had by 1920 attained a standing in the trade is evidenced by the fact that in the reconstruction period after the war, a joint industrial council was established for the metallic bedstead industry. There are two outstanding points of interest in connection with this Council, which we should not omit to observe, (1) that it has not superseded the Conciliation Board and usurped the place held by that Board in the trade, and (2) that non-federated firms are recognized as a separate sectional interest and were entitled to representation on the Council alongside organised workmen and organised employers. The general object of the Council was "to secure the largest possible measure of joint action between employers and workpeople... with a view to promoting the best interests of ALL employers and workers engaged" in the industry. The actual scope of the Conciliation Board was not affected in any way by this new institution, for it would still consider differences that may arise. But if the Board could not settle the issue, the matter was to be

referred to the Joint Industrial Council, and no strike, lock-out or arbitration could take place until the Council had given consideration to the matter.

The provision for representation of non-federated firms on a Whitley Council seems to be most inconsistent with the principles advocated by the Whitley Committee. There is no particular reason, however, why manufacturers should belong to the trade association, provided they are prepared to take part in any discussions regarding wages and working conditions or any other matter affecting the general interests of the trade. It has been stated above that manufacturers who were not members of the Bedstead Manufacturers' Federation took an interest in the deliberations of the Conciliation Board, but there was no formal provision for their participation until February 1919, when the rules of the Board were amended. From the date of the amendment, there have been, in addition to the seven representatives of the federated firms, three representatives of the non-federated firms. In practice, all notices convening meeting of the Board are sent to one non-federated employer, who makes arrangements for others to be present. Sometimes, one, sometimes two, or even three non-federated employers attend meetings of the Board and assist in all agreements concerning labour and wages conditions. This arrangement is preserved in the Council, the number of representatives from all three sections being the same as for the Conciliation Board.

The specific objects of the Council are much the same as those for all Industrial Councils.



1. Consideration of wages, hours and general working conditions with a view to maintaining equitable conditions throughout the industry.
2. Consideration of differences which have not been settled by the Conciliation Board.
3. Collection of information on matters appertaining to the industry.
4. Encouragement to study of process and design.
5. Attention to labour conditions as they may affect the health of workers.
6. Supervision of entry into and training for the industry.
7. Representation of the needs of the industry to official or other authorities, and the consideration of any matters referred to it by any public authority.
8. Consideration of measures for securing maximum production and regular employment.
9. "The consideration of means, not of a coercive character, whereby all manufacturers and operatives may become members of their respective organisations, as from time to time constituted, and for securing the loyal observance by them of collective agreements, and the adoption of the conclusions of the Council".

All of these objects sound well in theory, but in actual practice, they tend to get forgotten. This applies with special force in the case of the consideration of measures for strengthening organisation of both employers and workers. The Industrial Council does not meet very often, and has become entirely subordinate to the Conciliation Board. It is the latter which primarily deals with working conditions in the industry.

The most marvellous piece of work carried out in the immediate post-war years was the arrangement of <sup>a</sup> list of minimum piece rates to cover the whole trade. The first of these was drawn up for male workers, and later, women's work was also covered by a piecework price list. Hitherto, the arrangement of such lists had always been regarded as an impossible task,

and employers were rather sceptical as to the advisability of spending time on the work, when negotiations began in 1919. These negotiations were of a protracted nature, as the list had to be built up section by section. The method adopted was that about fifty or sixty workmen from each section of the trade, drawn from nearly every factory in the district, would meet and compare existing piecework prices for all classes of work covered by that particular section. From these comparisons of piece rates in the different factories, the men would draw up the minimum rates they considered to be just and equitable. When they had reached agreement among themselves, a few representatives of each section would join the union officials in bargaining with the employers. After many months of these discussions and bargaining efforts, the price list emerged.

There were nine sections involved, in one of which day-work rates only were to operate.

1. Angle preparing.
2. Cutting and Bending (day-work only)
3. Blacksmith's work.
4. Foundry work.
5. Chipping.
6. Brass Shop.
7. Compo Shop.
8. Polishing Shop.
9. Packing.

The list is much too comprehensive and elaborate to be quoted here in full, but one or two special features may well be noted.

The main operations covered by section 1. are straightening, punching and studding of sides and ends, and for these there are two sets of piece rates, one for machine

operations and the other for hand-press work. Naturally, piecework prices are higher for hand-press work than for machine work, and are stated at so much per hundred for sides and ends. Other work in this section of the list includes the punching of end angles; the straightening and punching of mattress frames, and of angle ends for tube side frames; cot framework; the mitreing of angles; and the cutting of angles. No minimum prices have been fixed for the cutting of angle iron either by machine or by hand; these prices have to be mutually agreed upon in the works. It has already been pointed out that angle-iron may have been cut to correct length before it reaches a bedstead factory. If the work covered by this section is done by any method other than that contemplated in the list, piecework prices are mutually agreed upon in the works.

The blacksmith's list covers a big range of prices, where forging is required for various parts and fittings of the different cots and bedsteads. There is a very large number of prices in this list on account of the variety of work done; seventy-eight prices altogether, and prices for some work are not arranged but are left for mutual agreement. The work in this section has in several cases to be described in great detail. For example, in giving the minimum prices for fitting and forging work on what is called an institution cot, the list describes the construction of the cot as follows:-

"Pillars up to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in., tube Top Rods up to  $\frac{7}{8}$  in., plugged and turned over; half-round Bottom Rods; Uprights up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. rivetted top and bottom in the 4 rails; 10 Rods in each side, 5 Rods in each end, detachable Head Rail;  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. tube Side Frame for Mattress, with Screwed Hooks, Collar Rods screwed t Hooks etc., extra.)



Prices are paid at so much per cwt for fitting and so much per cwt for forging, but if the cot has cast end rails, these two prices are not so great.

For foundry work there are no less than ninety-five specified prices for castings of all kinds. All kinds of devices are adopted in this section to overcome difficulties and to provide for elasticity where standardization is non-existent. Scope has to be given for mutuality in a number of instances as well. For the casting of ladder rails, the prices were applicable where there were 14 chills or under of ordinary pattern with one centre support to each rail in addition. For this work, it was agreed that a collection of chills should be obtained in duplicate. These were to be labelled and catalogued, a collection to be in the hands of each side for reference where necessary. The list goes so far as to provide for odd work, but where practicable it is recommended that this be done on a time-rate basis. If done on piece-work quantities up to 3 count as double, and quantities between 3 and 6 count as 6. In all cases, prices for casting include carrying to the chipper's bench. Such provisions as these are only a few of those which must be made in a trade of this nature to ensure smooth working and absence of disputes.

Little comment is needed on the list for chipping, except to state that there are twenty-seven separate prices. For what are termed French Ends, prices are dependent upon the dimensions of the work. There are also a few other classes of work in which prices are made to depend upon dimensions; in

one case even, extra is paid if the number of chills exceeds a certain figure.

The prices drawn up for the brass shops do not apply to the better-class of bedsteads. The prices specified apply to the making and assembling of certain classes of bedsteads which are more or less of standard pattern in the trade. Prices are given for:

Plain Round-Tube Bed.

Plain Square-tube Bed.

Four beds, numbered and scheduled by the Bedstead Manufacturers' Federation.

"Sandow" Bed (a square-tube bed of common variety)

Round Brass Bow-end Bed.

Round-Tube Sheraton Bed.

Square Bow-end Bed.

Round-Tube Cot.

Square-Tube Cot.

together with prices for Four-post Top work, Half-tester Top work, Drop-sides for cots, and Gallery on a brass bed. In some cases the prices depend upon the manner in which the bed is constructed. For example, the prices given in the list for the four beds scheduled by the Bedstead Manufacturers' Federation refer to fully screwed-up beds, and if the top and bottom rods are punched out and the step rods let in, the prices may be less by 1d. per plug (or 2d. per rod). The actual construction of the beds has to be fairly well defined and qualifications introduced to meet cases in which the bed may vary from the description given. For instance, in a plain round-tube bed, five step-rods must form part of the work performed before the prices stated can be claimed; but prices are 8d. per bed less if only three step-rods are put in.

Separate prices are payable for bending of top-rods in the four beds scheduled by the Bedstead Manufacturers' Federation, but in all other cases, the prices stated do not include bending. Except where definitely specified, piecework prices for bending are extra and must be mutually agreed upon. Similarly, prices stated for the common "Sandow" Bed do not include the dressing of the top-rods. Extra must be paid for this or the work must be done by the shop's dresser. It should be borne in mind that the making of brass bedsteads forms now only a small proportion of the work done in any bedstead factory.

"Compo" shop refers to the many ornaments and attachments which may form part of the finished bedstead, such as punnels, spindles, rings, mounts, rosettes, etc., and any odd work which may be necessary to complete the bedstead. The work is of too varied a nature to be described here, and the reader may judge how difficult it must have been to arrange the whole list when it is stated that there are over sixty prices given in the list. These prices apply to black bedsteads; and work on fancy coloured bedsteads must be paid for at the rate of 10 per cent. above the specified list prices. In this section, also, prices for bending, where this is necessary, must be mutually agreed upon.

Prices for polishing call for no special comment. They are fairly straightforward and are made to depend upon the dimensions of the tube to be polished. Thus, there are ten prices at so much per dozen feet of tube for polishing square-tube, these ranging from 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. per dozen feet for tubes <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>in. sq.



(1)  
to 5/- per dozen feet for tubes 2 inches square. These prices, of course are based on all work being polished by hand labour on ordinary spindle polishing lathes, and prices are subject to agreement if the work is performed by any other method. There are also prices for polishing mounts, ferrules, rod ends, tube bends and so on.

The extent to which the list caters for workers in the trade may be judged from the fact that piecework prices for packing even have been arranged. This section is sub-divided into Home Trade and Export Trade. The prices are paid at so much per dozen beds or cots for the following classes of bedsteads in both cases.

Cots.  
1 1/2 inch. French  
1 1/2 inch. Combinations.  
1 1/2 inch. Common. (2)  
1 1/2 inch. Best.  
1 1/2 inch. Common.  
1 1/2 inch. Best.  
2 inch. Common.  
2 inch. Best.  
Brass Beds.

In the Home Trade list there are prices for packing wood fittings, folders, chairs, and for side tying and castoring. There are

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- (1) These were the prices in the original 1920 list. Since then pieceworkers have suffered a 12 1/2 per cent. reduction from piecework earnings on the basis of the 1920 list. See p47.
- (2) A "Common" bedstead is defined as a "Plain Straight-bar French Bedstead, with Brass Top Rods and Brass Top Mounts, with or without Rosettes, and not more than one Spindle used as a support".  
There is one special exception to this description, as it was agreed that in "1 1/2 inch Pillars a Bedstead with Spindles or Kings and Spindles, not exceeding 4 inches in length, fastened to Top Rods", should "be regarded as 'Common'."

several prices in the Export Trade list for types of packing peculiar to that trade. There is room for mutuality even in the list for packing, for prices for case measuring and case marking under Export Trade are subject to mutual agreement in any works.

The whole list is a remarkable piece of work and surely would rank equal in achievement to any of the celebrated piecework price-lists which have operated in the Lancashire cotton industry. The metallic bedstead trade can claim to be every bit as complicated in the nature of operations, and there is certainly as much if not more scope for variety. True, there is some working to standard in the bedstead trade, but there is likewise variety. But the latter has proved no obstacle to the formulation of a list. Where any such difficulties are likely to be aroused, mutuality may always settle the issue.

This schedule of minimum piece rates for male workers came into operation at the same time as the minimum day-work rates, that is in March 1920, and two years later was to be followed up by a list for female pieceworkers. (1) Before this date the trade union had given no attention to women workers in the trade, but they began to enrol members at a rapid rate at the time when the union was negotiating for minimum day work rates and for a schedule of minimum piecework prices for females.

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(1) The list for female pieceworkers came into force after July 29th. 1922.

There were between 400 and 500 women members of the Bedstead Workers' Association in 1922.

In the women's schedule of piece rates there are three sections:

- (1) Wrapping.
- (2) Painting.
- (3) Transferring.

There are about thirty prices for wrapping arranged according to the class and dimension of the bedstead. The prices are for wrapping only, and if wrappers take brass-work off beds, extra prices are to be mutually agreed upon, but the prices given in the list include boxing or parcelling the brass parts. To some extent prices are dependent on the colour of the bedstead wrapped, as extra prices are payable for bedstead other than in black, standard green, blue and marone. The amount of this extra payment is agreed at 50 per cent. of half-papering prices. Extra to the list prices is also payable if no tissue-paper is used, or if the brass parts are covered with tar-paper, or if mounts are protected with corrugated paper, or if full papering is done over part papering. Prices for wrapping brass bedsteads are higher than those for wrapping iron bedsteads, on account of the extra care required in the operation. If water-proof wrapping is used for brass bedsteads, the piece prices must be 50 per cent. higher than the list prices. For special kinds of wrapping, such as in corrugated paper, cotton-wool, etc., prices are to be mutually agreed upon.

The list of prices for painting has no special feature. The prices are given for different classes of beds



or coats, and sometimes are stated as inclusive prices for ends and bottoms and sometimes as separate prices for these. These prices are for painting and dipping black or standard coloured bedsteads, with one coat, and are inclusive of the operation of stoving. But 3d. per bed is paid for unstoving. There are also prices for brushing, with one coat, angle frames, tube frames, and folders and chairs, stoving likewise being included, and unstoving paid an extra amount of 3d. per dozen. For brushing in black, green, white, or in fancy colours, day-work is recommended, but if piecework is requested by either workers or the management, the prices are to be mutually arranged.

Some transfer work has to be performed on most metal bedsteads, and the list of piecework prices provides explicitly and with simplicity for this class of work. There are three main divisions in the transferers' list. These are:

FRENCH BEDS. Tipped Chills, two rows foot, one row head, 4 Bands on Pillars.

HALF-TESTER & FOUR-POSTER BEDS. Tipped Chills, two rows foot, one row head, 10 bands on Pillars.

HALF-TESTER & FOUR-POSTER BEDS. Straight Prints and Flowers.

The prices in each of these divisions vary according to the dimensions of the bedstead. Transfers in white and fancy colours demand higher prices than those in the list to the extent of 1/- per dozen beds. Separate prices are given for

coloured transfers up to 5 inches square, and for trade-marks, names etc. In any case, the prices include the operation of stoving, but the worker claims 3d. extra per dozen bees for unstoving as with the painting list.

At the same time, as this piecework list came into operation, minimum day-work rates were established for female workers. These were:

	per hour.
Painters, Black.	7d.
" , Dipping.	7d.
Wrappers.	7d.
Lacquerers.	7d.
Colour Painters.	8d.
Transferers.	8d.

These rates apply to women who are competent to do the work without supervision, and who have had at least two years' experience. Of course, an employer may pay higher rates if he so wishes. Rates have also been agreed upon for semi-skilled female hands. These semi-skilled rates, dependent upon age and experience are:

	per hour.
Girls over 16 years of age, with one years' experience.	4½d.
Girls over 17 years of age, with two years' experience.	6½d.
Women, over 18 years of age, After 6 months' experience.	4½d.
" 12 " "	6½d.

The semi-skilled rates for women of over 18 years of age do not apply to the operations of painting and dipping. It is recommended that lacquering and colour painting by brushing should be done day-work, but if piecework is requested, prices must be mutually agreed upon. Skilled females are entitled to a bonus, which is fixed at 50 per cent. of that payable to the men. For the semi-skilled girls of over 16 years and under

18 years of age, the bonus is half of that payable to the skilled females.

Both men and women workers have been well catered for by collective agreements in the metallic bedsteads trade, but before closing this account of wages and labour organisation in the industry, the writer must bring the reader up to date. When rates of wages for adult male workers were last mentioned in these pages, the bonus stood at a total of 10 per cent. of basis rates plus a flat-rate advance of 32/-.. This was the condition of affairs in December 1920 when the bonus was at its highest level. By the end of 1921, the cost of living index number had fallen to 99, and the flat-rate bonus, accordingly, to 20/- per week. But employers were not satisfied with this reduction and brought before the Conciliation Board a claim for the withdrawal of the 10 per cent. advance which had been gained early in 1915 before any flat-rate bonuses had been paid or before minimum day-work rates were known in the trade. The men were not at all keen on yielding in the matter, but they gave in to the employers. But in agreeing to forego this 10 per cent. the men were inclined to hold the view that no attack should be launched against their basis rates. This did not become the subject of specific agreement, however, when in January 1922 the 10 per cent. was withdrawn. The workpeople were left then with their basis rates plus the flat-rate bonus which was subject to a cost of living sliding scale.

Not very long after this reduction, the men were unpleasantly surprised when employers put in a claim for a



reduction in the minimum time rates and in piecework earnings. There was disagreement over this issue in meetings of the Conciliation Board. Arbitration was suggested, but finally the matter was taken before the Industrial Court. Here the employers won their case, and the men had to submit to a reduction of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. off the day work rates as established in 1920. The piecework prices given in the list were not revised, but  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. is deducted from the earnings of a pieceworker to place him on the same footing as the time-worker. This  $12\frac{1}{2}$  percent. was withdrawn in three stages, 5 percent. from February 12th. 1922, another 5 per cent. from April 1st. 1922, and the final  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. from June 1st. 1922, ~~making up a total of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.~~ This reduction, of course, applies to the men's rates only, since women's rates had not been established at that date.

The flat-rate bonus<sup>(1)</sup> has suffered gradual reduction since 1922. From May 1922 to April 1923, it remained at 16/-, and after that date until 1927 it alternated between 16/- and 14/- per week, the usual seasonal movement in the cost of living index number accounting for any changes. In the summer months, bedstead workmen received 14/- in bonus, and in the winter months 16/-. In April 1927, the index number fell to 65, which was exactly 60 points below the datum point of January 1920; and in the following month, there was a further fall to 64. So the bonus declined by another 2/- per week for

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(1) The bonus is payable to both timeworkers and pieceworkers. In the case of a pieceworker, the bonus is added to  $87\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of his earnings on the basis of the list prices.

adult males, making it 12/- per week. From that time to the present, the bonus has alternated between 14/- and 12/-, the latter usually being the figure for the greater part of any one calendar year, with 14/- usually payable in the winter months of December, January, February and March. Thus, from May 1929 to the end of the year, the bonus was 12/- per week for men, the index number for cost of living varying between (1) 61 and 65. The index number for November 1929 stood at 67, and there was no change in December, so that from January 1st 1930, the bonus became 14/- again.

The bonus payable to workers other than adult males bears a fixed relation to the men's bonus.

<u>YOUTHS.</u> (engaged after October 18th. 1926)			
18 years to 20 years of age.	50%	of men's	bonus.
20 " 21 " " "	75%	of men's	bonus.
<u>BOYS</u> , under 18 years of age.	25%	" "	" "
<u>SKILLED WOMEN WORKERS.</u>	50%	" "	" "
<u>SEMI-SKILLED GIRLS.</u>			
Over 16 and under 18 years of age.	25%	" "	" "

Thus, all classes of workers have been catered for by collective agreement.

(1) The actual sliding scale is as follows:-

<u>INDEX NUMBER.</u>	<u>FLAT RATE BONUS.</u>
	s.d.
From 116 to 125.	24/-
" 106 " 115.	22/-
" 96 " 105.	20/-
" 86 " 95.	18/-
" 76 " 85.	16/-
" 66 " 75.	14/-
" ✓ 56 " 65.	12/-
" 46 " 55.	10/-

The collective agreements referred to in the above description of wages movements in the metallic bedstead industry apply to the whole country, but their main concern is with the Birmingham District. There are between twenty and thirty firms in and around Birmingham, a few in London, and others at Sowerby Bridge, Manchester, Warrington and Keighley, but the main strength of the trade union is bound to emanate from the West Midlands. Naturally, the union is not so strong in membership at the present time as it was during the war, the decline being most marked among the women members. It is a common failing in the ranks of organised labour that as soon as the trade union has succeeded in gaining some concession and in establishing recognized working standards, then workers feel satisfied and allow their membership to lapse. There are not 150 women members of the Bedstead Workers' Association at the present time.

But although the trade has been declining in importance for many years, the grip of collective bargaining has strengthened, and bedstead workmen have been able to establish minimum rates of wages which compare most favourably with other trade union rates. After due allowance for the 12½ per cent. reduction made in 1922, the minimum weekly rates and bonus are at present as follows.



	<u>Day-work Rate.</u>	<u>Total Rate with Bonus.</u>	
		Winter. (14/-)	Remainder of year (12/-)
	s.d.	s.d.	s.d.
Stock-Fitter (1)	74/4½	88/4½	86/4½
" " (2)	61/3	75/3	73/3
" " (Improver)	26/3	40/3	38/3
Cupola Man.	61/3	75/3	73/3
Frame Setter.	56/-	70/-	68/-
Bending.	52/6	66/6	64/6
Cutting-off.	47/3	61/3	59/3
All others.	47/3	61/3	59/3

It has been assumed in the above list of rates that the seasonal change in bonus is a permanent feature. It must not be overlooked, however, that the cost of living index number may yet register further decline, and if it were to fall below 55, then the bonus would fall to 10/- per week. For purposes of comparison, the minimum day-work rates, as established in the brassworking trades and in the metal, wire and tube trade, are given below.

WEEKLY MINIMUM DAYWORK RATES IN BRASS TRADES.

	<u>Rate.</u>	<u>Total Rate with Bonus,</u>
		(21/6½)
	s.d.	s.d.
<u>CASTING-SHOP.</u>		
Principal Hand (Fine work)	60/-	81/6½
" " (Ordinary)	54/-	75/6½
Moulder	42/-	63/6½
Getter-down.	35/-	56/6½
<u>POLISHERS:-</u>		
Grade E.	48/-	69/6½
" D	43/-	64/6½
" C	34/-	55/6½
<u>DRESSERS AND FINISHERS:-</u>		
Grade E	46/-	67/6½
" D	41/-	62/6½
" C	34/-	55/6½

## WEEKLY MINIMUM DAY-WORK RATES IN METAL, WIRE AND TUBE

## TRADE.

	Rate.	Total Rate with Bonus (12/-)
	s.d.	s.d. ( added.
Annealer.	} 37/-	49/-
Wire-Drawer.		
Head Roller.	} 35/-	47/-
Tube-Drawer (First Hand)		
Pickler.	} 33/-	45/-
Dresser.		
Other Semi-skilled or )	} 32/-	44/-
Unskilled Workers.		
Labourers.	30/-	42/-

The weekly minimum rates in the bedstead trade, are even better than those in the brassworking trades, and it is easily seen that both of these sets of rates are vastly superior to rates in the metal, wire and tube trade. Curiously enough the bedstead trade has been a declining one, the brassworking trades and the "heavier" sections of the brass trades have both been expanding ones.

Reasons have already been given for the relatively weak position of the workers in the metal, wire and tube trade, and one naturally seeks for reasons to explain the strong position of the bedstead workmen. It cannot be said that the trade union is numerically strong, and it is doubtful whether that body would be strong enough to engage in a lengthy strike if such were necessary. The trade union has now existed for forty years, and in its very early days was a powerful force in the trade. It learnt how to work with employers in the

'nineties during the days of the Alliance, but lost much ground in the first ten years of the twentieth century. In this period, relations with the struggling employers were not amicable, and the men were not strong enough to prevent the complete withdrawal of their percentage bonus. The strike on this question early in 1909 had left the trade union in a very weak state, and it was several years before the union could do anything for the workmen. Then, a few years before the outbreak of war, employers began to get together again and conciliation machinery was entirely overhauled. From that time onwards relations between both sides have been most friendly. The fact that the employers' organisation does not now claim so large a following has in no way endangered the observance of collective agreements in the trade, for non-federated employers are able to join forces with federated employers in the business of the Conciliation Board and of the Joint Industrial Council. Herein lies the secret of the success of collective action, that both sides can work together and that both sides trust one another.

The trade is now of much less significance. As one writer has put it, it was "a manufacture which had risen on the wave of Victorian fashion and of British commercial supremacy, but which was brought low by the tastes of a new era and by the growth of production abroad."<sup>(1)</sup> The result has been that many firms have gone out of business altogether, and

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(1) G. C. Allen. *Op.cit.* p.276.



others remaining have moved towards amalgamation. There has also been a tendency for firms to turn to other lines of manufacture, and rarely does one find a firm which confines its attention to the making of metallic bedsteads. The manufacture of bedstead mounts, as has already been pointed out, is a separate trade, and really forms a section of the brass trades. Workers in the trade are thus members of the Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society, which union also claims some members in the main bedstead trade. A brass polisher, for example may easily move out of a brass works into a bedstead factory and remain a member of the Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society. Brassworkers in the bedstead factories are generally however, members of the Bedstead Workers' Association.

The bedstead workers have not been allowed to suffer from the failing fortunes of their industry. The trade union, although only a small body compared with other trades unions has learnt the secret of true collective bargaining. It had given consideration, in conjunction with the employers, to a cost-of living sliding scale as early as 1919, months before other trades had taken credit for the idea. It has established minimum time rates of wages for all classes of male and female workers. More meritorious than these are the two piece work price-lists for men and women workers. Much of this success can be attributed to the good spirit prevailing on all sides.

CHAPTER 11.

The Locks, Latches and Keys Trade.

## CHAPTER 11.

### The Lock and Key Trade.

The making of locks and keys is a handicraft that has for several centuries been carried on in the Black Country and even today can claim to be a Black Country trade, since about 85 per cent. of the workers engaged in the industry in this country earn their living within this district. (1) It will be noticed that the writer has described the trade as a handicraft and not without purpose, for until comparatively recent times, power machinery was not widely used in the manufacture of these useful household articles. The large factory was almost as much an exception in 1900 as it was in the middle of the last century and locks and keys were produced by highly skilled locksmiths, assisted by apprentices, in small workshops. This was particularly the case at Willenhall and in the surrounding countryside, this being the principal seat of manufacture. Other places of manufacture in the area are Wolverhampton, Walsall, Wednesfield, and Birmingham and all kinds of locks have been produced in these centres, the chief kinds being rim, mortice, plate, cabinet, trunk and padlocks. A branch of the trade which was prominent at one time in the Darlaston district was the making of gun-locks for the gun trade of Birmingham but this trade has now practically disappeared as a separate trade from the Black

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(1) Census Reports 1921. The figures are :

England and Wales,	7857
Birmingham and District	6493
Staffordshire & Birmingham	6642.

(exclusive of lock and key makers in the safe-making trade.)



Country, locks for guns usually being made in the gun-making establishments of Birmingham itself. To some extent, there was some specialisation among the different centres of manufacture on certain types of locks, noticeably in the case of Wolverhampton, where the fine-plate lock was chiefly turned out. At Willenhall itself, all branches of the trade have been carried on but there was usually specialisation among the workshops. A locksmith was either a rim-lock maker or a cabinet-lock maker or a trunk-lock maker and so on. Actually, there are two branches of the trade, lockmaking (with which may be combined the making of latches) and keymaking, and although both branches are carried on in the same establishment, there have always been outworkers engaged in the making of keys. These keymakers still exist today, even though the manufacture of locks is now primarily carried on in modern and up-to-date factories by machine processes.

In so describing the structure of the industry, we are anticipating to a large extent and in recognising that changes in organisation have taken a long time to work themselves out, we should cast a glance back at the trade as it was in the 'sixties of last century. The first thing that strikes us is that it was far from being a factory industry; it was in all essentials a handicraft carried on in small workshops. There were one or two large establishments where many locksmiths were gathered together under one roof but even so,

they worked on much the same lines as their fellows in the smaller shops. The second thing that strikes us is that it was a trade in which apprenticeship was the usual method of entry, because lockmaking was a highly-skilled occupation. Thus, we are informed (1) that in the 'sixties, there were not more than six or seven large firms, the largest of which gave employment to not more than 50 adults and youths. The fact that the small workshop was the prevailing type of organisation is illustrated by the figures given by another authority (2), relating to the same period. The total number of hands employed in the industry about the year 1865 was given as 4950, for the district covered by Willenhall, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Wednesfield and Bromwood; and the number of employers was estimated at 460, there being a proportion, then, of 10 workers to one employer. This estimate for the number of masters corresponds to that given about the same time by the Commissioner enquiring into the conditions of employment of children in the 'sixties, who gave the figure as about 400 for Willenhall, Wolverhampton, and Wednesfield, together with about 40 gunlock makers at Darlaston. of the 5,000 hands, about

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(1) Children's Employment Commission, 3rd. Report, 1864. The Report of the Factory Inspector for 1869 (two years after the metal trades were brought within the compass of factory legislation), gives the following figures for the number of "factories" in the lock and key trade (a "factory" having 50 or more hands and utilising steam power) :- Wolverhampton 4, Willenhall 1, Walsall 2, Total 7.

(2) Tildesley. - in "Midland Hardware District". Ed. Timmins, 1866, p. 89.

3,000 belonged to Willenhall and its immediate surroundings. There is no lack of authority for the statement about the large number of master locksmiths relative to the total number of hands employed. The historian (1) supplies us with the following figures for the growth in the number of such locksmiths between 1770 and 1855 :-

Number of Master Locksmiths.

<u>Location.</u>	<u>1770.</u>	<u>1855.</u>
Willenhall	148	340.
Wolverhampton.	134	110
Bilston	8	2
	<u>290</u>	<u>452.</u>

In 1841, we are informed (2) that there were 268 locksmiths, 76 keymakers, 14 bolt makers and 13 latch makers in the district a total of 371 masters in the trade. Thus, the trade would seem to have grown more rapidly after 1840 than it did before that date and as it grew, Willenhall developed as the chief centre of the industry at the expense of Wolverhampton.

The majority of employers were small masters employing from one to four apprentices and perhaps a journeyman(3).

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- (1) Hackwood. "Annals of Willenhall" 1908. pp. 160, 161.  
 (2) Report of R. H. Horne on employment of children in 1841, quoted in "The Construction of Locks", by A. C. Hobbs (Ed. Tomlinson), 1868. p. 156  
 (3) The term "journeyman" is not used here in the same sense as it has been in the preceding chapters dealing with the brass trades.



Some workshops contained no journeymen at all, as when apprentices had served their "time", their services would be dispensed with and such journeymen had no option but to set up as small masters themselves. (1) Thus, there were few large masters and few journeymen, and many small masters and many apprentices. Very often, these small masters combined some sort of retail dealing with the making of locks, as is shown by records like the following, taken from a Post Office Directory for the district (2) :-

"Key stamper and beer retailer.  
 Door-lock maker and beer retailer.  
 Grocer and trunk-lock maker.  
 Malt-shovel tavern keeper and rim-lock maker.  
 Lock-maker and provision dealer.  
 Grocer and key-maker.  
 Cabinet lock maker and Woolpack tavern.  
 Key-stamper and Registrar of births, etc.  
 Hope and Anchor and cabinet-lock maker.  
 Auctioneer and locksmith.  
 Rim-lock and varnish maker. "

The locksmith's wife usually attended to the retail business while he carried out his trade in the workshop attached to his dwelling-place.

There were two types of apprentices to be found in the locality, indoor and outdoor. The latter were confined to the townships and were mostly engaged in the few larger establishments and earned, in the 'sixties, about 4s. per week at the age of 14, with 1s. added each year as the apprentice approached the end of his term. (3) The condition of the

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(1) Hobbs. Op. cit. p. 159.

(2) Quoted by Hobbs. Op. cit. p. 156.

(3) Children's Employment Commission. Op. cit.

indoor apprentices was much worse than that of the outdoor apprentices, as they were mainly "parish" apprentices imported from other districts. They would commence after payment to the locksmith of a small fee with a suit or two of clothes and afterwards were entirely dependent upon the master for board, lodging and clothing during the period of apprenticeship. At one time, such boys were put to the trade at the very tender age of 8 or 9 years but in the 'sixties they were usually bound to the master at the age of 11 or 12 years. The indoor apprentices earned no wages, although sometimes they were allowed pocket-money when work was plentiful. Conditions of employment were by no means enviable, for the apprentices were expected to keep the same hours as their masters, which meant that often there was a rush to get work completed at the end of the week. Locksmiths preferred idleness at the beginning of the week, as did many workers in other metal trades of the district and the apprentices had to conform to the usual hours of working. This was not only the habitual custom in the small shops but also in the few larger concerns. As piece-workers in these larger shops, the men came to work when they liked, left when they liked, and did as much work as they liked when there, "this freedom of action being spread over a working day of perhaps sixteen hours." (1) Conditions were much the same in the 'sixties as they were in the period described by Disraeli in his "Sybil", that is, as they were in the late

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(1) Hobbs. Op. cit. p. 157.

'thirties. According to the novelist, the masters were ruthless and cruel and the business of the district was conducted at the later date on the same lines as had been described by him. The novelist wrote: "At Wodgate (which has always been taken to refer to Willenhall), a factory or large establishment of any kind is unknown. Here labour rules supreme. Its division indeed is favoured by their (the inhabitants) manners but the interference or influence of mere capital is incessantly resisted. The business of Wodgate is carried on by master workmen in their own houses, each of whom possesses an unlimited number of what they call apprentices, by whom their affairs are principally conducted and whom they treat as the Mamlouks treat the Egyptians. " (1)

The master locksmiths disposed of their wares to factors and merchants in the locality and usually trudged off with an apprentice each Saturday to Wolverhampton for this purpose. With so many small masters in the trade, competition was keen and dealers were able to play one locksmith off against another in buying their wares. This was especially the case with the makers of the cheaper varieties of locks who came mainly from Willenhall. Small and large masters sold their goods in this way and consequently wages in the trade were always notoriously low for such a skilled occupation. It was always hard work for very poor returns. Wages were always paid on a piecework basis and thus they were usually higher in

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(1) Disraeli. "Sybil."  
Also quoted by Hackwood. Op. cit. p. 169



Wolverhampton where the better class locks were produced. (1)  
 Yet, strangely enough, there was little migration from the Willenhall district, where the ~~locksmiths~~ locksmiths were loth to leave their home.

In those days, lockmaking was mainly a blacksmiths' trade, as most of the lock parts had to be forged on the anvil and the young boys were expected to operate the bellows in the smithy which was attached to the locksmiths dwelling-place. The tool was the hammer and the materials the rolled black iron secured from the rolling mills of the districts. Even the lock-plates were largely hammered out on the anvil and then shaped with shears and chisel. Some of the work was done on the fly-press, a hand machine which had been in use for this purpose since 1790. A fair amount of strength was required for the operation of this press but sometimes boys and youths were put to do this kind of work. From the 'sixties onwards, some blacksmiths' work was gradually dispensed with as cast-iron lock cases were introduced but this did not affect the forging required for the fashioning of the bolts. Much of the skill of the locksmith was centred in the operation of filing at the vice, in which the many pieces had to be shaped and smoothed ready for assembling. In the making of the common types of locks, boys would be found working monotonously

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(1) The range of earnings given by Tildesley. Op. cit. for Wolverhampton was 25s. to 40s. per week and for other districts it was 18s. to 30s. per week. The general average for a skilled locksmith in the 'sixties would be about 20s. per week. (Children's Employment Commission. Op. Cit.)

at the vice. In those days there were few opportunities for female labour, except in japanning where such was necessary. The locksmiths wife would perform this work, the kitchen oven being requisitioned for the stoving process. (1) The equip-  
ment was not<sup>then</sup> of an elaborate or expensive character, ~~and~~, and consequently, the small master could operate successfully.

In the keymaking branch of the trade, the operations were similar, forging, stamping, piercing and filing. The use of the stamp for the production of key blanks was known in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the blanks coming in the early days from Birmingham. Later, the stamping of keys was done in the Black Country and developed into a separate trade. It was a hot stamping process, carried out on the old type of "kick-stamp", on which the weight was raised between an upright framework with the assistance of a foot stirrup. After emerging from the stamp, the blanks required trimming for the removal of the surplus metal on the edges. The skilled work came after, either in the piercing of the pipe or barrel or in the filing and cutting of the wards. The piercing was done on a small machine worked very much like a foot-lathe. Some keys were made from malleable iron castings, these having been in use from the early days of the century. There is no doubt then that the Black Country locksmith or keymaker was a skilled handicraftsman, whether working in his

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(1) F. J. Butter. "Locks and Lockmaking". p. 122.

own home, or in a small workshop, or in a larger establishment, and as a skilled workman was capable of making his lock outright

The trade was expanding during the 'sixties and continued to develop in the following decade, but after that there was little expansion until the first decade of the new century. The lock trade suffered badly in the great depression of 1886, and the condition of the workers became almost intolerable. Their earnings had been low enough in the 'sixties, but they were 15 or 20 per cent. less in 1886 than in 1866.<sup>(1)</sup> It was in the 'eighties that machinery first began to be used in the trade, but it was not until after 1900 that there was any great extension of its use. The small workshop still held its own, and conditions of labour still verged upon a "sweated" level. Factory inspectors constantly referred to the unfortunate circumstances of the workers in the trade. This could be attributed to the large number of small masters, who were often at the mercy of unprincipled factors and dealers, and who always found that they were working on a very small margin of profit. Thus, wages in the trade, even for skilled hands were no better than those for labour of an unskilled nature.<sup>(2)</sup> The lockmakers were in a weak bargaining position with the merchants, and even in January 1890 when they gave merchants notice of intention to increase prices by 10 per cent. they were not strong enough to make the merchants pay the

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(1) G. C. Allen. Op.cit. p

(2) Vide. Reports of Chief Inspector of Factories. 1888, p.107; 1890, p.25; 1891, p.104; 1894, p.209.



extra, so prevalent was underselling by the makers. One government department in 1894 decided that it would not encourage "sweating", and refused to buy locks from makers who employed outworkers.<sup>(1)</sup> The trade had also lost some of its former markets, due to increasing competition from German and American makers.

Only very slowly did the trade undergo any transformation, for there were still between 400 and 500 workshops, large and small in 1895, employing about 4,000 to 5,000 hands. Soft malleable iron was by this time gaining on wrought iron, and forging at the anvil had entered upon its decline. The Key making branch had likewise witnessed new developments, for the wards of some keys, which had previously been cut by hand, had been formed in the rough castings with "wonderful clearness and accuracy". These new developments were chiefly associated with the cheaper class of door-locks, and had the effect of aiming a blow at two very ancient and skilled trades, namely forging of lock fittings and the cutting of wrought keys. In the Willenhall door locks, steel stampings for the cases were likewise gaining ground. As in other trades of the district

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(1) "Labour Gazette". February 1894.

"It having been brought to the Attention of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that an extensive practice prevails in the Lock Trade of employing outworkers, their Lordships consider that this practice or custom, though not constituting "sub-letting" in the ordinary sense of the term, is beset with objectionable conditions, calculated to result in sweating and inferior workmanship, and they have therefore decided that it shall be stipulated in future contracts that all locks are to be made in the contractor's own factory."

changes were also taking place in the nature of motive power, for the gas engine was finding its way into the lock factories and supplanting the steam engine.<sup>(1)</sup> Changes in workshop organisation had not been so great, and workmen were still individual lock-makers, although the apprenticeship system was not quite so firmly rooted by the end of the century as it had been in the 'sixties and 'seventies. The large factory had not, however, taken the place of the small workshop by the beginning of the new century, and there were still large numbers of homeworkers in the trade. By examining the census returns for the year 1901, we gain some impression of the condition of industrial organisation. The number of male workers returned for Staffordshire at that date was 4,583. Of these, 313 were "employers", and 176 were "working on own account". There were in addition, 519 females engaged in the trade. Thus, if we add these females to the 4,094<sup>(2)</sup> males who were employed by "employers", the total number of employees would be in the neighbourhood of 4,600, and the average number of employees per employer would be about 15. The typical business unit must still have been of comparatively small size. Just under 10 per cent. of the 4580 males were "homeworkers" at the same time. More opportunities were at this date presenting themselves for the employment of females, and it will be seen from the above figures that somewhere about 10 per cent of the total labour force in Staffordshire was made up of females.

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(1) Report of Chief Inspector of Factories, 1895. p.37.

(2) This figure of 4094 is arrived at by subtracting the "employers" and workers "on own account" from the total number of males.

In a trade of this nature, where the worker was very much an individual craftsman working on a payment by result basis, one would scarcely expect to find any organised body of workmen acting for the betterment of conditions of labour. Yet the lock trade did not escape from the wave of enthusiasm for organisation which swept the country round about the year 1889, and in that year, the Lock and Metal Workers' Union<sup>(1)</sup> came into existence. This union always found it a difficult business to organise the workers in the trade, especially those in the small establishments. The union intervened where it could to improve piecework prices, but was never able to obtain a uniform piecework price-list for two reasons; in the first place, the employers were not organised and consequently no collective agreement on such a question would have been observed, and secondly, the great variety of patterns was an obstacle which could not be overcome. The union was instrumental in assisting the pieceworker in one direction, however. On a petition being presented by the men, the Home Office made an order in 1897<sup>(2)</sup> for the application of<sup>the</sup> Particulars Clause to the trade, and this order which ensured that pieceworkers should have full particulars of the rates at which they were employed became operative from October 1st. of that year. In 1902, another order was made,<sup>(3)</sup> which was applicable to both inworkers and outworkers, and there is no doubt that but for the vigilance of

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(1) This is the present name of the Society, to which it was changed in 1924 from "National Amalgamated Lockmakers' and Metal Workers' Trade Society".

(2) Order dated August 20th. 1897.

(3) Order dated July 14th. 1902.



(1)

the union, this order would never have been observed. It was extremely difficult to get observance of the order in the smaller workshops, and even in the larger factories employers were rather afraid that their competitors would become acquainted with the piecework prices they paid their workers. The terms of the order provided that particulars should be conveyed to the workmen either by placard or written note. Only two firms had adopted the placard method up to 1908. Conditions in some establishments were much better than in other and in at least one large factory, a committee of the workmen conferred with the management when changes in piecework prices were proposed or when new work was to be priced.

(2)

(3)

In the early 'nineties the lock trade had suffered in common with other trades of the district from depression, which was much more acute in some branches than in others. In 1893 and throughout the whole of 1894, makers and dealers had large stocks on hand, and the majority of workers were on short time. Conditions were little better in 1895, and it was not until 1896 that any improvement was shown. Then all sections of the trade benefitted from the revival which had set in throughout the district; only the key stampers did not share in the more prosperous conditions. The improvement was continued into the early part of 1897, and this period witnessed general advances in the wages of operatives. As early as July 1894

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- (1) Factory inspectors bore testimony to this. Vide. Reports of Chief Inspector, 1904, p.101; 1906, p.70.  
(2) Report of Chief Inspector of Factories. 1908, p.53.  
(3) Ibid.

plate-lock makers at Wolverhampton had gained substantial increases in piecework prices, these being raised from 12/6 to 17/6 per dozen. <sup>(1)</sup> ~~about~~ A year later, about 50 place-lock makers benefitted from increased piecework prices on government contracts. <sup>(2)</sup> Then in July 1896, there was a fairly general advance of 10 per cent. in the trade, <sup>(3)</sup> although for makers of common brass and iron padlocks, half of this advance was deferred until January 1897. <sup>(4)</sup> Night-latch makers obtained this 10 per cent. in August 1896. <sup>(5)</sup> The Keysmiths gained a similar advance of 10 per cent. in July 1897. <sup>(6)</sup> Some firms in the district would not concede the extra wages as paid throughout the greater part of the trade, and it was necessary in such cases to withdraw labour from those shops. Even with these advances in wages, the earnings of skilled locksmiths were relatively low, the average weekly remuneration being about 24/- to 25/-. In spite of certain changes in method of manufacture, workmen were still all round craftsmen who, with the assistance perhaps of a youth, even in the larger factories made the locks outright. The men resented any attempt to sectionalise the work by splitting up the work into component operations, because they feared that as a result earnings would be driven still lower. One dispute on this question in 1894 lasted for about seven months, before the firm, a fairly large one, gave in to the men. <sup>(7)</sup>

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- (1) "Labour Gazette". August 1894.
  - (2) Ibid. July 1895.
  - (3) Ibid. July 1896.
  - (4) Ibid.
  - (5) Ibid. September 1896.
  - (6) Ibid. July 1897.
  - (7) Ibid. May 1894. November 1894.

But the improvement in trade was short-lived, and trade was less active in the later part of 1897; the common padlocks section had suffered even before this. Quiet times followed in 1898, 1899, 1900 and 1901, and the workmen had lost much of what they had gained in 1896 and 1897. Again competition ran riot, and undercutting left its mark on piece-work prices. The year 1902 brought slightly better conditions and the trade union put forward a claim for an advance of 10 per cent. The employers resisted this demand, because there was no guarantee that these improved conditions would continue. There was no channel through which conciliation could proceed, and the men came out on strike in October, 1902. But they were not able to gain what they wanted, as they were not powerful enough to control the whole of the labour force. After a long struggle, which cost the union several thousands of pounds in strike pay, the men were compelled to return to work without their 10 per cent. This dispute left the union saddled with a debt of £2530 to various other unions and bodies which had come to its assistance. (1) This disturbance almost resulted in the disbandment of the union, but the organisation managed to carry on, although its membership had suffered. It had something to live for, since it was decided that a Wages and Conciliation Board should be set up for the better settlement of disputes in the trade. This Midland Lock and Latch Trade Wages Board, as it was called, was constituted on the usual lines

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(1) The last item of debt was paid off in 1928 - to the Midland Counties Trade Federation.



but was not going to accomplish much for the improvement of conditions for several years, because trade fell away in 1904 and continued slack for some time. Much short time was worked in 1905.

It was during this first decade of the century that changes in the organisation of the industry and in methods of manufacture began to take effect. The trade had already lost its European and South American markets, as a result of German competition and it was later experiencing further competition from the American cylinder lock, which was a machine product. Sooner or later, South Staffordshire makers would have to combat this new form of competition by turning to a similar type of machine made lock. It was not until 1909 that this "Yale" type of lock was produced in a South Staffordshire factory and this led the way to a simplification of processes, greater division of labour and the introduction of female machine operatives. These highly mechanised processes had not, however, made very much progress by 1914. Another factor which had prepared the way for the newer methods of production was the introduction of steel to take the place of wrought or cast-iron. Wrought iron cannot easily be machined and that is one reason why machinery had not made much headway in the lock trade. The cases had been made from cast-iron and the various parts forged from wrought iron or malleable iron castings. Now the cases could be pressed from steel and the bolts made from drawn steel sections. More and more females were finding their way

into the trade, as japanners and polishers, as well as at the presses. <sup>(1)</sup> So, in this transitional period when the trade

was beginning to take on a new aspect, it could hardly be expected that organised labour would have much influence on working conditions.

The changes meant the appearance of larger factories, although the small workshop employers and the domestic workers still survived. We learn that there were 90 factories in Willenhall alone in 1908 and 9 more in the Short Heath district <sup>(2)</sup> The figures for Wolverhampton and other parts of Staffordshire are not given but it is safe to say that there were over a hundred factories in the district towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. The same authority also states that the number of workshop employers in the two places at the same date was 190, so it was obvious that the smaller business units had not disappeared from the trade. If we turn to other available information we get some indication of the increase in the number of factories in the dozen years between 1895 and 1908. The reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1896 and 1897 included tables showing the number of factories <sup>(3)</sup> ies

- (1) By 1911 the proportion of female labour had increased to 20 per cent of the total number of persons engaged in the trade. The following figures extracted from the Census Reports for 1911 support this statement:

	Males	Females	Total
England and Wales.	5,288	1,150	6,438.
Staffs. Warws. & Worcs.	4,795	1,091	5,886.

- (2) Hackwood. Op. cit. p. 164.

- (3) A "factory", of course, was an establishment in which power driven machinery was used.

and workshops in different trades and persons employed in them as they appeared on the registers for 1895 and 1896. These show that there were 71 factories in Staffordshire in 1895, and 83 in 1896. This increase may have been due to the fact that some factories<sup>escaped</sup> tabulation at the earlier date but we may easily compare this figure of 80 with that of 100 for 1908. The figures given for workshops in the factory inspection records are a less reliable index, since many workshops may have escaped the notice of the authorities and because they only apply to workshops in which "protected" hands were employed. Thus, workshops employing only males over 18 years of age would not be included, unless they crept on to the register by accident. The corresponding figures for workshops in Staffordshire were 185 for 1895 and 204 for 1896. (1) There is no doubt, then, that from 1896 onwards, the smaller workshop declined in importance and the factory began to take its place. The census reports for 1911 do not give separate county records to show the number of "employers" compared with "employees" and those "working on own account" but as about 90 per cent of those engaged in the industry belonged to the counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, (2) we may use the figures for England and Wales to show that the homeworker had not disappeared and that there were still many working on their own

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(1) The average number of hands per factory was 38 and the average number<sup>per</sup> workshop was 10.

(2) Vide Footnote on page 481.



account in 1911. The figures where status was given in the returns were :-

	<u>Males and Females.<sup>(1)</sup> Of whom Homeworkers.</u>	
Employers	316	90
Employees	5,741	158.
On own account	187	134.
Total	<u>6,244</u>	<u>382.</u>

But the seeds of change had then been sown.

The trade itself had been compelled to modify its customary habits of working and had been stimulated by foreign competition and declining trade to make changes in organisation. The workmen had gained to some extent through the better relations which were made possible by the Wages Board but the Board did not assist in establishing uniformity of working conditions, so varied were the types of locks and so wide the range of skill existing among the operatives. No general advance in wages occurred until 1912, when through the Wages Board, the men gained 10 per cent in two instalments, in July and August of that year. This was the first general advance since 1896. In 1913, the Board gave consideration to a piece-work price-list for the making of hasps; negotiations proved successful and the price-list came into force on January 1st, 1914. The prices were stated independently of the 10 per cent which had been gained in 1912 and a pieceworker had this 10 per cent added to his earnings on the basis of the list. Two years previously a piece-work price-list had been arranged in another of the Black Country Metal trades which was in some respects

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(1) Exclusive of those returned as "retired" from the industry

allied to the lock trade. This list, which came into operation on January 1st, 1912, had been arranged by the Midland Counties Trade Federation for trap makers, whose seat of industry was at Wednesfield. It was a long and elaborate list, covering all kinds of traps made in the district. In this case, day-work rates had been agreed upon for a working week of 55½ hours. These rates were on the whole satisfactory. They were for the different classes of workers :-

	<u>per week.</u>
	s. d.
Spring Forger	41. 0.
Fire and Vice Man	32. 6.
Presser and Tool-Repairer (not Tool-maker)	30. 0.
Vice Man	29. 0.
Presser	26s. 0.

In addition, rates for youths were recognised, these being arranged according to age.

17 - 18 years	11. 0. per week
18 - 19 "	13. 6. " "
19 - 20 "	17. 0. " "
20 - 21 "	21. 0. " "

In the main body of the lock, latches and key trade, however, it was going to be some time before recognised minimum rates were to be established.

There were indications then in the immediate pre-war years that the trade union, through the medium of the Wages Board, would have succeeded in establishing standard conditions in the trade: the trade of lock-making was becoming a factory trade, machinery was bound to lead to a greater degree of standardisation of product, the old individualistic skilled craftsman would be of less importance,

and factoring was on the decline. Now, all of these tendencies were to be accelerated during the war and it is not surprising that trade unionism in the trade was to emerge after the war in a much stronger position and that collective bargaining was to achieve successes equal to those gained in other metal-working trades of the district. During the war years, the equipment of most factories underwent a very definite change, and establishments, largely as a result of the war work undertaken, assumed the condition of engineering establishments, with tool-rooms and up-to-date machine shops.

Throughout the war, workers, both male and female, received several advances in wages, but the Lock and Metal Workers Union was not a party to the engineering agreement of February 1917. After the conclusion of that agreement, however, the advances gained followed closely those in the engineering trades. Very soon after the opening of hostilities, the men obtained an advance of 5 per cent., this occurring early in 1915. They obtained another 10 per cent in January 1916, and a further 10 per cent in October 1916. Then followed the flat-rate advances of 1917, 1918 and 1919, usually a trifle later than in the general engineering trades. Locksmiths were also able to get the "Churchill" bonus, of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. to time-workers and  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent to pieceworkers. They were not awarded this until March 1918, but the payment of this bonus was made retrospective, as from February 1st, of that year. In this period, progress was made in labour organisation and the union was able



to do something for outworkers in the trade. Advances gained by these workers were in the form of percentage additions to whatever piecework prices were being earned in the pre-war days. The total amount of flat-rate advances obtained by adult male workers up to the beginning of 1919 was 21s.6d. per week., but lockmakers did not get the further advance granted to the engineering trades by the Industrial Court in April 1920. Boys and youths had received corresponding additions to their earnings in the war period, the flat-rate/<sup>bonus</sup>being applied at half-rate for youths between 16 and 18 years of age. Women workers who had found their way into the trade, in increasing numbers, were able to add to their weekly earnings and a commencement was made with the organisation of these workers by the Lock and Metal Workers Union. By this time, apprenticeship was the exception rather than the rule, but in 1919, the union entered into negotiations, through the Wages Board, for the establishment of a uniform form of indenture, and for the recognition of definite rates of remuneration for apprenticeship workers. They were successful in these efforts and an indenture on the usual lines was established. The apprentice was bound to serve his master faithfully, to keep trade secrets, and to "demean himself as a faithful apprentice ought to do", while the master was to agree to teach him by the best means the "art, trade or mystery of a lock and key maker" and to pay the

scheduled rates of remuneration. The rates were :-

1st year	20s.0	per week.
2nd year	22. 0.	" "
3rd year	25. 0	" "
4th year	38. 0	" "
5th year (and last)	42. 0	" "

These rates were subject to any changes which might be made from time to time by the Midland Lock and Latch Trade Wages Board. The wages of apprentices were to move pro rata with the wages of other operatives. This form of apprenticeship was different from the old type which had at one time brought disrepute to the trade and in this new arrangement, of course, the parent or person making himself responsible for the apprentice had to agree to provide him with food, lodging and clothing. If it were found that a boy was not likely to become proficient after the end of the first year of service, the apprenticeship could be terminated by mutual agreement. A boy could be dismissed without notice for misbehaviour or for any disregard of the covenants into which he had entered.

It is interesting to note that these rates of wages for apprentices were the first standard rates to be established in the trade but not long afterwards, minimum time rates were to be established for adult male-workers. The war had been responsible for a change in the general system of working. In the old days, the skilled locksmith had been paid by the piece but by the beginning of 1920, most men were working on a time basis. The employers were anxious to revert to the former method of working, but the men raised objection. They had discovered that by working on a time basis, they were rid of many of the former inconveniences which prevented them from making good

money on piecework. Often, when working by the piece, they were kept waiting about for materials, or they were expected to search about the shop for their tools and materials, time thus being taken up in which they were unable to work for their earnings. But on timework, it was to the advantage of the management to see that all materials came along smoothly in order that the maximum production should be achieved. Increasing mechanisation of processes had undoubtedly aided this better organisation of the workshop. So, when employers suggested piecework, the union would not agree to return to the pre-war conditions, the memory of which was still uppermost in their minds. Instead, they stood out for guaranteed time-rates, such as were to be found in other trades but it was faced immediately with the problem of grading the workers. There were so many different types of locks, some requiring next to no skill for fitting up and assembling, while others needed very delicate workmanship.

Eventually the difficulties were overcome, and agreement on the subject of grading was reached through the Joint Industrial Council for the Lock, Latch and Key Industry, in February, 1920. The old Wages Board had decided in December 1919 to resolve itself into a Joint Industrial Council and met as such on January 10th, 1920, and one of the first problems to which the Council gave attention was the establishment of graded rates of wages.



All locks, latches and keys were divided, for the purpose of grading, into four classes, A.B.C. and D.(1), and for each class there were to be four grades of workmen, designated X, I, II, and III. A recognised rate of wages was established for each grade within each class, so that altogether, there were sixteen rates for male workers. These rates were for a working week of 47 hours and were fixed at the following figures :-

	<u>Class A.</u>	<u>Class B.</u>	<u>Class C.</u>	<u>Class D.</u>
Grade X	98s. 0d.	90s. 0d.	86s. 2d.	82s. 3d.
" I	94s. 0d.	86s. 2d.	84s. 3d.	78s. 4d.
" II	86s. 2d.	82s. 3d.	78s. 4d.	74s. 5d.
" III	78s. 4d.	76s. 4d.	74s. 5d.	70s. 6d.

There had been no minimum rates before this date, so that it was possible for the war bonuses to be merged into these new rates. It will be seen from these rates that it was quite possible for a workman engaged in making the cheapest kinds of locks to be rated at a higher figure than the least efficient worker on the best quality locks. It was the type of lock upon which a man was engaged which determined his class and it was his ability as a producer which determined his grading within the class. The fastest men were Grade X, medium men in either Grade I or II and the slowest men in Grade III. Any youth in the trade was entitled to be graded upon attaining the age of 20. Grading cards were to be issued by the union showing a man's standing in the trade and his rate of wages but the union could not proceed to grading without exact particulars of the

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(1) See Appendix C.A. for classification of locks, latches and keys.

work upon which any particular man was engaged. There was much scope for bargaining, then, between the employers and the union over the question of grade. There would be little difficulty in grading ~~the~~ the older and experienced hands, but it was no easy matter to decide what a younger worker was worth if he had been kept largely at repetition work. If the work were done on piecework then piecework prices had to be such as would yield not less than the minimum graded rate, according to the grade in which such pieceworkers were placed.

It has been stated above that the trap making trade of Wednesfield was closely allied to the lock trade and workers in that trade were members of the Lock and Metal Workers' Union. In 1920, the Union was also able to negotiate for advances in wages to these workers, the males receiving a 30 per cent increase to bring the rate for a competent hand up to about 80s. per week. The female operatives in the trade likewise gained but by flat-rate advance. The Union found difficulty in this trade in securing loyal observance of the general conditions and a long strike, spreading over eleven weeks, occurred at one firm where attempts were being made to enforce reductions.

During the immediate post-war period, it became necessary to establish an agreement on the delimitations of men's work and women's work, because there were many more females in the trade and certain rates of wages were agreed upon for power-pressing, capstan lathe work and polishing.

It was also agreed that no girl of under 17 years of age should be engaged at power-pressing. The highest of these rates was for a power-press worker of 18 years of age and over and was fixed at 40s. per week.

Later in 1920, all classes of workers secured further advances. From July 9th, 1920, the men's basis rates were increased by 10 per cent. Females of between 15 and 18 years of age gained an advance of 20 per cent. on the existing rates and women of over 18, whether engaged on power-pressing, capstan work or at polishing, gained a further 10 per cent. The outworkers, who were mostly keymakers, had gained a big increase early in 1920, when 60 per cent. added to their earnings had brought their total increments to 200 per cent. above pre-war piecework prices. In July, 1920, they also benefited by a further 10 per cent., making their advance up to 210 per cent. above the 1914 level. At this time, the Industrial Council was preparing a new list of rates for women and girls, which was intended to be more comprehensive than those already in existence.

The highest level was reached with the advances of July 1920, as trade fell away towards the end of that year. Early in 1921, the 10 per cent. gained in the previous July was withdrawn in two stages, 5 per cent. being taken off from March 11th and another 5 per cent. from April 8th. The percentages added to the rates of females were also reduced and then withdrawn altogether at the second date. Outworkers were subject to the same reductions, so that their percentage became 200



above pre-war level. At this time, trade had become very slack, unemployment was beginning to show itself and most firms were only working for three days per week. In the trap trade, 50 per cent of the workers were unemployed. In order to alleviate distress, the Joint Industrial Council was advocating organised short-time and the non-employment of married women. Further reductions in wages were likely to follow and soon manufacturers in the lock trade put forward an application for a reduction of 25 per cent. After repeated conferences and negotiation, it was finally agreed that from the first pay-day in December 1921, there should be a reduction of 10 per cent. to apply to males, females and outworkers. Thus, the basis rates established in 1920 for males and females suffered their first reduction. About the same time, employers in the trap trade were endeavouring to secure reductions of 30 per cent. on piecework prices and 20 per cent off day-work rates. Following protracted negotiations on the matter, the employers' application was postponed for consideration in 1922.

In March 1922, it was agreed by the Joint Industrial Council that future reductions in wages should be dependent on fluctuations in the official index number for the cost of living. For every variation of 12 points in the index number, there was to be a corresponding variation of 5 per cent. in the rates of wages for each grade. The index number limits were :-

98 - 110	(equivalent to rates of 1920 less 10%)
86 - 98	
74 - 86	
62 - 74	
50 - 62	(1)

(1) The scheme was not to operate below an index number of 50.

At the time of the adoption of the scheme, the index number stood at 86, so that the rates then payable were 10 per cent. less than they were after the 10 per cent. reduction from the 1920 rates. It will be seen that all idea of a bonus had vanished, since the variations in wages were not to be flat-rate movements, and the higher grade men would lose more in absolute amount by any reduction. The next reduction under the scale came in May 1923, when the index number fell to 74 and as the index number has not since then fallen to as low as the 62 points above 1914, the rates have remained unchanged since May 1923,. Thus the rates for the various grades for the past seven years have been :-

	<u>Class A.</u>	<u>Class B.</u>	<u>Class C.</u>	<u>Class D.</u>
Grade X	73s. 6d.	67s. 6d.	64s. 7d.	61s. 8d.
" 1	70s. 6d.	64s. 7d.	61s. 8d.	58s. 9d.
" 11	64s. 7d..	61s. 8d.	58s. 9d.	55s.10.
" 111	58s. 9d.	57s. 3d.	55s.10.	42s.10d.

The men in the trap trade had suffered their reduction towards the end of 1922 but they were not of the same opinion as the officers of the union that such a reduction was desirable at that time. In fact, when the matter was submitted by ballot to the whole body of members of the trade, 75 per cent. voted against it. There were three proposals put before the men,

- (i) Reduction of 15 per cent. of basis rates with no time limit.
- (ii) Reduction of 20 per cent " " " " 6 months
- (iii) " " 25 " " " " " " 12 " " } guarantee

The union officials wished to avert a strike, and eventually the men were persuaded to allow the union to negotiate for a

reduction. The settlement arrived at was a reduction of 20 per cent. The trap makers had only been admitted to membership of the union in 1916, since there was no organised body other than the Midland Counties Trade Federation to look after their interests. But many of these workers soon ceased to take much interest in the union, and at the present time, in this small trade, organisation is not so strong among the workers. The outworkers in the keymaking trade have also ceased to pay allegiance to the union, and although several attempts have been made to re-organise them, these have proved of no avail. The result is that their piecework prices are often very low and very little can be done for the improvement of their conditions of working.

Since 1923, the depression in trade has not been so pronounced as it was in 1921. Conditions began to look brighter in 1923 and at some factories, overtime was worked in that year. There were still some men on the unemployed register, however, and the union did not look with favour upon the working of overtime while these men remained out of employment. Another reason why it was alleged by the union that these lockmakers remained unemployed, was that an increasing number of youths had found their way into the trade and had taken the place of men. The union was devoting attention to this question and hoped that the Industrial Council would be able to remedy matters. One section of the trade had suffered because fashion had changed. This was the padlock section and demand for the



old tumbler padlocks had fallen off considerably. Changes in methods of manufacture in other sections was responsible for displacing skilled male workers, especially in the cabinet section of the trade. In spite of a strike in the building trade which had curtailed demands to some extent in 1924, conditions of trade had revived on the whole during 1923 and 1924, although there were some sections in which short-time was still necessary. The number of unemployed had declined, not only as a result of better trade conditions, but also because men were turning their hands to other trades.

In 1924, another set of minimum rates of wages came into operation. These were for youths who were not apprenticed to the trade. Rates for apprentices had been fixed in 1919 when the general form of indenture was drawn up, but actually, the majority of youths were not apprenticed and very little advantage was taken of the arrangement. The basis rates for youths came into operation from March 1st, 1924 and were arranged to correspond with those for adult workers. They were likewise subject to the cost-of-living scale, a 12 points rise or fall in the index number to result in a 5 per cent. rise or fall in the rate. The basis rates were fixed at different ages as given below in the second column and with an index number of over 62 and less than 75 which has regulated the rates since their inception, the actual rates have been as in the third column.

<u>Age.</u>	<u>Basis Rate.</u>	<u>Actual Rate.</u>
15	21s. 4d.	16s. 0d.
16	23s. 4d.	17s. 6d.
17	28s. 8d.	21s. 6d.
18	40s. 0d.	30s. 0d.
19	44s. 0d.	33s. 0d.

These rates were higher than those arranged for apprentices.

By this time all workers in the trade were catered for, since there<sup>were</sup> also rates of wages for workers in the bobbing and polishing sections. In this section of the grade, there were many brass polishers and the rates of wages as established by collective agreements in the lock trade compare favourably with those in the brass trades. There are four graded rates for a working week of 47 hours.

1st Rate.	83s. 1d.	} Rates payable while the cost of living index number remains above 62 and below 75.
2nd "	77s. 8d.	
3rd "	72s. 3d.	
4th "	67s. 0d.	

The first rate is applicable to a charge hand with one or more men under him; the second to a man who is able to do his own repairs to the bobs; the third to a man who is able to do fine bobbing; and the fourth to a man who is able to do rough bobbing.

The scope of minimum rates for females had been considerably enlarged and altogether, thirty recognised rates have been established, covering all classes of work, and <sup>according</sup> arranged to the age of the workers. The extent to which female labour has now been utilised in the trade may be judged from the list of occupations for which rates have been fixed.

1. Power-pressing; Varnishing; Stamping small lock-cases; and Bobbing; (Power-pressing to commence at 17 years of age.)  
 Rate for first six months at 17 years of age 22s. 1d. pr.wk  
 Afterwards 30s. 7d. " "

2. Small class of Hand-pressing; Putting in Bushes and Wards; Stumping; Machining pad, cabinet and trunk locks, Milling; Drilling; Grinding wards and follows; also Rough Warehouse.

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	20.
Rate	12s/6.	15/11	18/1	20/1	24/3	26/0	26/11

3. Polishing; Capstan Lathe; Emery Wheeling; Planing;

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	20.
Rate	15/s 3.	18/0	21/1	22/1	26/11	28/9	30/7.

4. Warehouse; Wrapping-up etc., Lacquering.

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	20.
Rate.	12/6	14/11	18/1	19/1	23/3	24/3	26/-

5. Women engaged on Keys.

Age	14	15	16	17	18	19	20.
Rate	14/4	17/-	20/1	21/1	26/-	28/9	29/7.

Girls entering the trade for the first time at the age of 14 or 15 years may be paid 3s. less per week for the first six months of their employment.

These rates were also subject to the cost of living sliding scale but there has been no variation since the ~~index~~ number has not fallen as low as 62. They were minimum time-rates but a large number of the female operatives are put on piecework and as pieceworkers, have a higher minimum standard; for by agreement between the union and the Midland Lock and Latch Manufacturers' Association through the Industrial Council, piecework prices must yield at least 25 per cent. above these daywork rates. There is no such stipulation for the men pieceworkers, whose minimum rates



are no higher than those fixed for time-workers. These time-rates for females in the lock trade are not quite up to the level of those fixed by the two Trade Boards but they were superior to the rates which engineering employers have enforced in the Birmingham district.

The union began to get perturbed by the continued influx of youths into the trade. Such young workers needed to be controlled; not only was there a likelihood that in times of slackness the youths would be retained and the men suspended, but such young workers were not likely to develop into skilled workers. They were not apprenticed and were usually given repetition work, without having an opportunity of learning all processes up to the assembling of the finished article, as in the old days. There was a danger then, that as young men grew up in the trade, the average wages they could command would not be of a very high standard. As a check upon the introduction of youths, it was agreed in 1924 that there should only be one youth retained for every four men engaged in the production of locks. The agreement was to operate for six months from the beginning of 1925, at the end of which time the operation of the agreement was to be brought up for re-consideration. Thus, a very old defensive weapon which had been used in the early days of labour combination was brought into play in the collective bargaining in the lock trade. Employers were, on the whole, much opposed to such restrictive regulation, although it affected some firms to a greater extent than others. In the cabinet section youths had been employed most, while at the

other extreme there was the rim and mortice lock section where practically no youth labour was employed. The majority of employers were inclined to be obstinate and a number refused to discharge any surplus youths, with the result that notices had to be served in some instances in order to compel all manufacturers to fall into line. There is no doubt that this restriction created some further openings for the re-instatement of displaced adult workers. In another direction, the union was endeavouring to pave the way for greater opportunity of employment for all workers, by urging the total abolition of overtime working in order that unemployed men may be re-absorbed. The union was not, however, able to secure agreement to this but instead, obtained a concession whereby higher rates of remuneration would be paid for all work beyond 47 hours per week. The overtime rate for timeworkers has thus become time and a quarter and in similar circumstances 25 per cent. is added to the prices of pieceworkers. Yet another instance of the union's desire to improve the circumstances of those who were suffering from the effects of changing methods of manufacture was their interesting subsidy scheme, by which the trade union was prepared to subsidise a workman's earnings while he was learning a new branch of the trade. If a workman were unable to obtain employment at his former branch of work, with the consent of the union he could take on a different class of work at a lower rate to be agreed upon between the employer and the union. The union was prepared

to make a weekly grant of 50 per cent of the difference between his former rate and the rate agreed upon for his probationary period on the new work. This subsidy scheme only applied in cases where workmen entered upon a different class of work from that on which they had previously been graded. Actually, this scheme of subsidy was never utilised to a very large extent.

In all directions, then, organised labour had made fullest use of its opportunities in the trade, and collective bargaining was firmly established. The improvement in trade in 1924 and 1925 had resulted in an increased membership of the union, tremendous strides having been made in the organisation of women workers. The following analysis reveals the phenomenal advance recorded in this period.

<u>Membership of Trade Union.</u>			
	<u>1924.</u>	<u>1925.</u>	<u>Increase.</u>
Males	1692	1966	274.
Females	354	1038	684
Total	2046	3004	958.

There had been nearly 50 per cent increase in membership between 1924 and 1925. But it was a difficult task to maintain solidarity in the ranks of women workers and while the number of males increased by 29 in the succeeding year, the number of females declined by 133, so that the total membership of the Society was 2900 at the close of 1926. In that year, a separate women's organiser was added to the staff, so that the year 1927 witnessed a recovery of practically all the ground that had been lost in the preceding year. The men unionists



increased by 79 and the women by 110, bringing the total membership of the union up to 3089. There has been some falling off in the last two years but in relation to the general fortunes of trade unions, this trade union may be regarded as being in a fairly strong position. Minimum rates of wages have been established for all classes of workers, males and females, adults, youths and girls, and a grading scheme has been evolved for the male lock-makers. There is a definite understanding as to what constitutes women's work and there is an overtime agreement. There is no uniform price-list; but in any case, such is rendered unnecessary by the fact that piece-workers are guaranteed minimum weekly earnings and that about 80 per cent. (1) of the male workers are now employed on a time basis.

Such a state of affairs may be due to the existence of a Joint Industrial Council but there is not very concrete evidence to support this explanation. The Council merely took the place of the old Wages Board and it has accomplished nothing that the old machinery would not have been capable of yielding. It can scarcely be said that on the manufacturers' side there exists any great keenness for organisation and collective action. While some employers are quick to recognise that such action is a protection against harmful unregulated competition at the expense of the worker, others are just as individualistic as ever. It is not often that we find employers posting up

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(1) Estimate supplied by official of the Lock and Metal Workers' Union.

notices in their works with the express object of strengthening labour organisation. Yet this happened in one factory in 1924 when the following notice was put up by the employer :-

"It has come to our knowledge that some of our competitors are paying wages less than those arranged by the Wages Board.

We have reason to believe that the Lockmakers' Federation (Lock and Metal Workers' Union) are handicapped in their efforts to enforce the proper rates by the lack of sufficient contributory members.

The Directors of this firm are of opinion that it is in the best interests of their operatives for them to have a voice in the decisions of the Wages Board by becoming members of the Lockmakers' Federation. For this reason they have decided that - 'On and after Friday, November 23rd, all non-members of the Lockmakers' Federation will have a reduction of 10% from existing wages'. " (1)

This is an uncommon course of action, for even the best employers are not usually prepared to discriminate between union and non-union men. But it cannot be denied that the adoption of such a course as was taken by this particular firm was action in the spirit of rule number 5 of the Joint Standing Industrial Council for the Lock, Latch and Key Industry, which laid it down that one of the objects of the Council should be :

"The consideration of measures for securing the inclusion of all employers and workpeople in their respective Associations."

How farcical this object now appears to be ! What does the average employer in the lock trade care whether his employees are union men or not ! There are a number of manufacturers in the trade who have no desire to belong to any employers' organisation, and it is only with extreme difficulty that the

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(1) Annual Report of Lock and Metal Workers' Union, 1924.

trade union managers to secure observance of agreements in the trade. Sometimes, on the other hand, it is the apathy or laxity of the workers that is responsible for the non-observance of the agreed working standards.

The grading of workmen is a constant source of trouble. Dissatisfaction often arose over the grading of youths at 20 years of age, when they passed from a youth's grade into one of the adult grades. With a view to improving conditions in this direction, the Council decided in 1927, that in future, grading of the younger hands should be post-poned until the age of 21 years. This meant that another rate of wages for un-apprenticed youths had to be agreed upon. This rate has been fixed at 4/3s. per week, to be paid from the time of attaining the age of 20 years to the date of grading at 21 years of age. The main sources of dispute arise in connection with repetition work. Large numbers of standardised = parts go to the making of locks under modern conditions and these are produced rapidly by machine process. Thus, instead of a worker passing from one process to another and proceeding right through to the finished lock, he is frequently kept at one machine process for long periods. In this way, there are fewer opportunities of becoming an all-round skilled hand. This reacts against the worker for purposes of grading, because the employer contends that he is not a proficient lock-maker. A few years after the inception of the scheme, it was discovered that many men were not in possession of grading cards and efforts had to be made then to see that the



principle of grading was thoroughly applied. In 1928, new grading cards were issued throughout the trade. Even if a workman is a process worker and not a lockmaker in the strict sense of the word, the union contends that he should have a grade and be entitled to a minimum rate. A member may be expelled from the union for failure to stand by his graded rate. It should be noted that these graded rates were still liable to be varied if the cost of living index number fell to 62, but the index number showed little sign of falling to that level and fluctuated round about the 70 mark. The men were rather anxious to see their existing rates stabilised but the employers would not consent to this step. It was not until late in 1929 that the "fédder basis" was definitely abandoned and the rates were stabilised at the same figures as had been in operation since May 1923. But there is no such thing as a bonus in the lock trade, just straightforward time-rates for male and female workers, with guaranteed rates for piece-workers.

Changes have taken place very rapidly in the lock and key trade and it can now be regarded as a branch of the engineering industry; formerly, it was a blacksmiths' trade. As long ago as the 'sixties a writer, after commenting on the methods of manufacture and the structure of the trade as it was in those days, had indicated the way by which the trade could become a factory industry but it was to be many years before his principles were to be applied generally in

practice. Hobbs (1) had written :

"It is just possible that the application of the factory system to lockmaking may first become important by making the best locks cheaper than they can be made by the handicraft method: for there seems not much probability, at least for a great length of time to come, that any new system will be able to compete with Willenhall in the common locks - those of which more thousands are sold than there are tens of better locks."

Better still is his further passage, which the writer sees fit to quote here in its entirety:

"In the manufacture of locks and keys generally, there is no reason why the factory system should not, to a certain extent, be applicable. By this will be understood the production of similar parts by tools or machines, graduated in respect to each other with more care than can be done by the hand method. If we suppose that a lock of particular construction comprises twenty screws and small pieces of metal, and that there are required, for general disposal in the market, five sizes of such a lock; there would thus be a hundred pieces of metal required for the series, each one differing either in shape or size, from every one of the others. Now on the factory or manufacturing system, as compared with the handicraft system, forging, drawing, casting, stamping and punching, would supersede much of the filing; the drilling machine would supersede the drill-stock and bow and other machines would supersede other hand-worked tools. This would be done - not merely because the work could be accomplished more quickly and more cheaply - but because an accuracy of adjustment would be attained, such as no hand-work could equal, unless it would be special work at a high rate of payment. For any one size in the series, and any one piece of metal in each size of lock, a standard would be obtained, which could be copied to any extent and all the copies would be like each other."

In the newer establishments which were springing up in the United States at the time when Hobbs wrote those words, such methods of working were being put into practice but it was only in the very few large concerns that anything was done on those lines in this country. His remarks foreshadowed what was

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(1) A. C. Hobbs. Op. cit. pp. 160 - 161.

ultimately to be the general mode of operation, but not until the twentieth century was the development to gain momentum.

Reasons have been scattered in these pages for the changes ~~in~~ the new century; such as the stimulus to improved organisation as a result of foreign competition, the more general use of steel instead of wrought iron and cast-iron, the introduction of the American cylinder lock and the copying of this by South Staffordshire producers, together with the newer machinery installed in the factories for supplying war-time necessities. So, centre and capstan lathes, milling, drilling, shaping and other machines <sup>have</sup> come into more general use. It must not be assumed that if these processes have become supreme, standardisation has resulted in a wholesale diminution of patterns; there is bound to be variety both in size and quality in a trade of this nature. There is no very clear-cut distinction between the hand-made and the machine-made lock under modern conditions of manufacture, because both may require some amount of hand labour, and what is regarded as a hand-made lock will require machining of some kind. There is still room in the industry for some highly skilled men for fitting and assembling. The character of the labour force has undergone a vital change, however, and the proportion of female labour has swelled to somewhere between 30 and 40 per cent. of the total number engaged



in the industry. (1) There are now over a hundred factories in the South Staffordshire District (2), and the workshop has practically disappeared from the trade; outworkers in the key industry are not now a numerous class.

Labour organisation has fortunately kept pace with business organisation and conditions for workers in the trade are now vastly superior to those generally obtaining in pre-war days, when the trade was always referred to "notoriously low-paid". Of course, the union has been aided in post-war years by more buoyant conditions of trade than in other industries, and this has been attributed (3) to the stifling of American competition in the cylinder lock, new demands for

(1) The figures given in the Census Reports for 1921 (inclusive of employers and managers) were :-

<u>England and Wales.</u>		<u>Birmingham &amp; District.</u>		<u>Staffs. only</u>	
Males	5229	Males	4190	Males	4152
Females	2628	Females	2303	Females	2052.

These figures are exclusive of lock and key makers in the safe-making trade.

Of the 2303 females returned for Birmingham and District, 576 were pressworkers and stampers, 253 machine tool workers, 212 lock and key makers, 261 warehouse hands, 76 packers, 141 glazers, polishers, buffers or moppers, 84 japanners, and 145 clerks.

The whole of these would not be employed in the making of locks and keys because curry-combs and different kinds of door furniture are sometimes produced in the same establishment as locks, latches and keys.

(2) F. J. Butter. Op. cit. p. 130.

(3) G. C. Allen. Op. cit. p.

motor locks, the progress in housebuilding and the habit of travel, with a consequent demand for suitcases and bags. Collective bargaining is fairly well established, although the individualistic employer is still an obstacle and a menace to collective agreements. The workers' representatives on the Joint Industrial Council have always supported the National Association of Industrial Councils in its representations to the authorities for the placing of minimum rates of wages fixed by Industrial Councils on the same footing as Trade Board rates, so that such rates may be legally binding on all employers in the trade. But this has not come to pass. In a way, it seems illogical that a Trade Board in the general stamped or pressed metal wares trade can impose legally binding rates of wages for such workers as skilled brass polishers and yet minimum rates of wages fixed for brass polishers in the lock trade by an Industrial Council are not enforceable at law. Similarly, we may refer to female pressworkers and stampers covered by the Trade Board rates and those engaged in the lock and key trade. If rates fixed by a Joint Industrial Council were ever to be made legally binding, then a powerful weapon would be placed in the hands of organised labour, a weapon which the Whitley Committee never intended that the unions should wield. It cannot but be recognised that, in spite of evasions of the payment of the standard rates by some employers, workers in the lock and key trade have been able to improve their position tremendously without such a weapon

## CHAPTER 12.

### Statistical Survey.

- (1) General Excursus on Wages Statistics.
- (11) The Trend of Wages in the Brass Trades,  
Bedstead Trade and Lock Trade.



## CHAPTER 12

STATISTICAL SURVEY.(1) General Excursus on Wages Statistics.

It is probably true to say that of all branches of economic enquiry, that dealing with wages is most fascinating, because it approaches most nearly to the human element in our social and economic environment. We feel instinctively that the last word will never be uttered about the subject of wages, and though we pursue diligent studies of all that business men, workmen, trade union organisers and "arm chair" economists have to say in the matter, though we scan with critical gesture all that the pages of text books and monographs have to tell us, there remains always an unsatisfied appetite for something more conclusive, something which will explain why such and such should be. In order to extricate ourselves from the bewildering obscurity surrounding us, we cry out for facts, and more facts, with an earnest hope that light may at last be shed on those aspects which baffle us and give rise to incredulity. So it is that if no account of wages in general, or of wages in any particular industry satisfies us, if we still clamour for theories, we seek solutions "based upon more precise studies of wages in different industries, occupations and territories"<sup>(1)</sup>

Now, these precise studies will tend to move more and more in the direction of quantitative analysis, and the seeker after

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(1) J.W.F.Rowe, - "Wages in Practice and Theory". p.293.

definite knowledge of conditions in those industries sees possible salvation in statistical research. He asks: "What do the figures say about wages"? But before that question is put and any attempt made to analyse the figures, perhaps it is as well to ask: "What can the figures say?", "What is expected of them?" Not until we are brought face to face with such questions as these do we realise in how limited a sphere we can work with the figures at our disposal. There is one particular direction in which we would like figures to assist us, and this is best illustrated by asking another question. Can it be said that any particular class of worker is "better off" now than at some previous period? We are ever ready to make comparisons, especially between one period and another, and statistics of wages appear to be a deserving object of our zeal.

Thus, we set ourselves the task of tracing the course of wages over a span of years, often without reflecting carefully upon the nature of the material at our disposal. Many mistakes are made as a result of neglect to note the distinction between a "rate of wages" and "earnings", and more often than not, no attention is given to the exact connotation of the term "rate of wages". It certainly cannot mean a maximum wage, we prefer to think there is no such thing as that; but the term may mean one of three things. It may be,

- (a) a minimum rate of wages for a defined number of hours of labour, such minimum rate and number of hours being fixed by collective bargain and agreement between a body of employers and a similarly associated group of workers, or fixed by some regulative authority like a Trade Board.

or, (b) a defined rate of remuneration for a defined number of hours of labour, agreed upon by individual bargain between a particular employer and any one of his employees.

or, (c) a rate of remuneration fixed by individual bargain and agreement between employer and employee, where there exists also a recognised minimum rate (as in (a) on previous page), and where the rate so agreed upon individually may be in excess of the agreed minimum rate.

It may easily be alleged that there is no distinction between the first and the third of these types, since an agreed minimum rate does not set a dead-level standard. While it is admittedly true that there may be abundant scope for fixing rates in excess of an agreed minimum figure, it is equally true that in some trades the minimum rate fixed for any class of worker tends to become the actual rate earned, while in others, such as in the engineering trades, an agreed trade union minimum rate may be less than the average rate actually being paid to such class of worker. In any treatment of wages records, the three conceptions should be clearly kept in mind; for in a trade in which collective bargaining and the establishment of minimum rates of wages are comparatively recent features, records of the course of rates as conceived in type (a) may only be available for a short period of years. In any case, such record, whether for a long or a short period, may mask the real situation if actual rates of wages are as <sup>of</sup> type (c) above. If minimum rates of wages in any trade can only boast of a short existence, then the statistical chart becomes very much restricted in scope, in view of the fact that records of rates of wages as conceived in type (b) are usually inaccessible.



If an accurate record of any of these types of rates were examined, assuming such record to be available, the results would in no way present a proper picture of "earnings" over the period reviewed, although records of the second and third types of rates would approximate to such condition. A rate of wages, of any of the above types, is for a full working day, or week, or any other recognised length of time; hence, if the full time is not worked, "earnings" and "rate of wages" are not the same things. The most likely factors influencing any discrepancy between the two are overtime, short-time, and sickness. Statistically then, we are confronted with a dilemma: which record should we trace? Theoretically, the solution of that problem depends largely upon the purpose for which we require the record. There are always two sides to every question, and this obviously holds good for wages. If we wish to press our desire to know whether any worker is "better off" at one time than at another, we require records of "earnings". If, on the other hand, we wish to consider how wages may have struck the employer, the trend of "wages rates" is perhaps of more vital interest, as an indication of the "price" an employer was compelled or prepared to pay. At any given moment, for a certain number of hours of labour on a particular class of work. The two records, if placed side by side, would not necessarily present a similarity in appearance, because "earnings" may differ from week to week, whereas a "rate" usually remains constant over a fairly long period. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as those experienced during

the war, are rates of wages varied rapidly (1).

So far, our remarks have only related to time work, but piece work conditions do not introduce any very disturbing qualification. Although no limit is placed in a piece worker as to the amount of wages he may earn, there is usually some sort of minimum rate applicable in his case. In the first place, no piece work price is ever fixed without reference to the amount of work that can be executed, or that is expected to be produced, in a given time; and secondly, a piece worker is usually guaranteed a certain time-rate in any case. For instance, the terms of the brassworkers' agreements provide that piece work prices must be fixed so as to yield to the worker of average ability at least 25 per cent above the time-rate. In the metal, wire and tube trade, as in the general engineering trades, there is a similar agreement, the percentage above time-rate being  $33\frac{1}{3}$ . Similarly Trade Boards are empowered to fix a piece work basis rate, that is, the rate which must be reached by an "ordinary" piece worker, and this may be equal to or in excess of the time-rate. In the lock trade, where collective agreements now regulate rates of wages, piece workers are subject to the same minimum rates as time workers. In actual practice, then, there is usually a piece worker's minimum rate, which may be equal to or greater than the corresponding time-rate. In the case of piece workers, "earnings" are likely to be more irregular than for

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(1) Even during the war period rates determined by collective agreement were not subjected to frequent alteration.

time workers, although time workers are subject to irregularity of employment in just the same way.

Again, we have been considering in the abstract a "particular class of worker". This phrase is also of some significance, since it has become customary to make a somewhat arbitrary division into skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers, and to trace the course of wages for each class separately. Such a division is rather necessary, because it is invariably found that wages do not always move to the same extent in the three classes, although they may move in the same direction. It is always of interest to compare and contrast the changes for these different classes of workers. But the classification adopted is not altogether satisfactory for statistical purposes, because there may be more than one class of skilled worker, and it would therefore be necessary to find the average rate for such skilled workers. This process would involve "weighting" in accordance with the relative numerical strengths of the occupational groups. There can be no very strong objection to the use of an "average" figure in the case of a "rate of wages", on account of the fact that within a class, such as skilled or unskilled, there is unlikely to be any substantial deviation from the average. There may, however, be difficulty in arriving at suitable figures from which to calculate the "weights". In dealing with "earnings" the statistician must not omit to take into consideration any deviation from an "average" figure, especially if his main concern is with piece workers.



It has been intimated above that a possible objective for the statistician is to discover whether workers are any "better off" at one time than they <sup>been</sup> have/ at another; in the language of economists, to determine the course of "real" wages. There is no sanctity attaching to any special terms economists may choose to use, and in order to avoid confusion, the writer has no intention of laying too much stress upon conventional phraseology. He is satisfied if he conveys the intended meaning without labelling such or burdening such with terms which may convey different meanings to different readers. It is not easy to outline what conditions one would expect to be fulfilled in order that a worker may claim to be "better off" at one time than at another. A convenient criterion is, of course, the degree of command his earnings give over material wants. In other words, do x/- go less far, as far, or further now than they did y. years ago? To give answer to that question we turn to our index numbers for movements in general prices, and we place those index numbers alongside some sort of wages record, and then point out to our worker that he is "better off" than before, or that he is in the same relative position. In making the comparison, we are very apt to forget that in the intervening period he may have been led to alter his mode of living, to regard former luxuries as necessities <sup>(1)</sup>, and to spend his earnings in a manner far from being identical to that of a former period.

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(1) Of course, it can be claimed that if a worker is able to obtain what he regarded at one time to be inaccessible luxuries, he is "better off".

In such circumstances, whether a worker is "better off" becomes a matter of opinion rather than a matter of cold statistics.

Yet another factor to be borne in mind in a consideration of this question is that a rate of wages may be stated at a certain sum per week, or at a certain sum per hour. The recognised figure for normal weekly hours of labour in most instances undergoes modifications at infrequent intervals only. For example, in the Birmingham metal trades these hours had for several years before the war been generally 53 or 54 per week, whereas they were reduced in 1919 to 47 per week, at which figure they have remained ever since. It is quite sound to argue that a workman in receipt of 35/- for 47 hours of labour is "better off" than when he earned 35/- for 54 hours: yet the 35/- cannot be spent as profitably at the later period if in general, prices are 50 per cent higher. Quite apart from the fact that the wage per hour may have increased, and that prices for satisfying needs have also increased, there is the further possibility that an extension of the worker's leisure time will have brought into existence new needs to be satisfied. Where rates of wages have been increased and hours of labour reduced, some sort of balance must be struck between the two ameliorating influences in order to get an estimate of the net advantage accruing. This may be done by comparing the hourly rates at different dates. Even so, one still has to face the fact that a housewife's main concern is the manner in which the weekly wages may be spent, and from that viewpoint

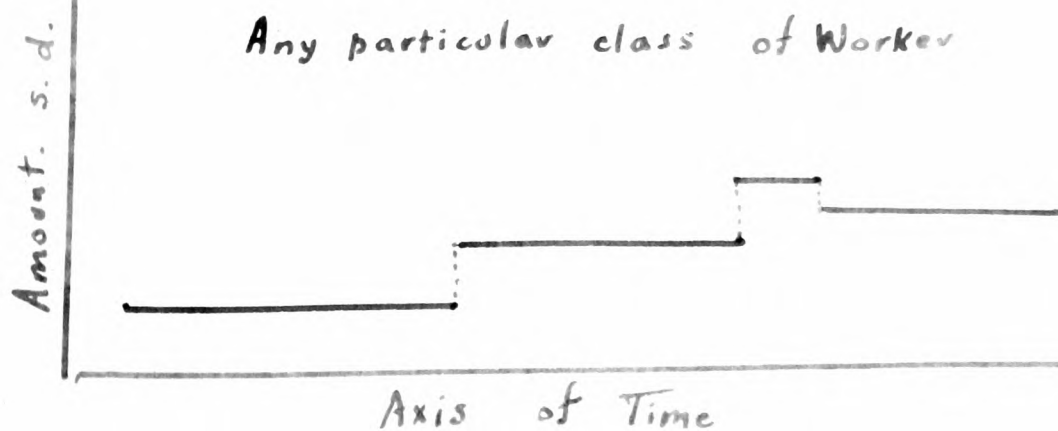
hourly wages prove less valuable indexes than the weekly figures for estimating whether there has been an improvement in the conditions of providing what is considered to be the worker's normal standard of living.

So it will be realised that statistics of the trend of wages may take more than one form, and yet prove of little avail in whichever form they may be clothed. Supposing one is tracing the course of rates of wages as conceived by type (a), a graph would assume a shape not unlike the side elevation of a flight of steps, because such rates are not subject to frequent alteration (1). Some sort of trend may be deduced from such diagrammatic representation of the facts. This kind of material is usually at the disposal of the statistician, because records of trade union or other minimum rates are usually accessible.

A graph showing the course of rates of wages of the (b) type would be something different, because there would be no single rate for the purpose of plotting the points on the graph. The statistician, in this case, would be dealing with an "average" rate, calculated from a large number of individual rates. According to all the dictates of economic theory, within a comparatively small area in which the labour

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(1) Course of Weekly Rates of Wages.





supply is fairly mobile, there should not be a high degree of variability about the "average" for any particular class of labour. It is difficult to substantiate this view, for two reasons. First, it must be borne in mind that an employer will always be prepared to recognise a high degree of skill and conscientiousness and to pay for it. Even were we to narrow down the term "particular class of labour", differences in skill will always be exhibited, especially amongst metal workers such as those with which the foregoing chapters have been dealing. The other more obvious reason why the theory cannot be put to the test is because there are no means of discovering what these rates of wages have been. Such records are locked up in the wages books of the long established firms, or have been destroyed forever during periodic clearances of "rubbish" from the offices. In some cases, of course, in spite of the absence of accurate first-hand knowledge of the facts, there are no very serious grounds for disputing that there is such a thing as a general rate of wages (apart from rates fixed by collective agreement) for a district. Only where labour is definitely of a low degree of skill, however, can it be held that such is true. It is a commonly accepted fact, for example, that there is a general district rate for work known as labouring, where next to no skill is required. Again, in a centre like Birmingham, there may quite easily be a general district rate for female stampers or pressworkers of certain experience. With so many influences at play, it is scarcely possible to visualise what appearance such a graph for type (b) rates would present. It may be reasonable to assume that it

would not be vastly different from that given for minimum rates of wages, but one cannot be dogmatic. From the point of view of trend, rates of wages of type (c) would be similar to those of type (b), since they are fixed by individual bargain. This graph would appear much the same as the one for minimum rates: it would assume a position such as would be expected if that graph were pushed up a peg or two from underneath.

What would such records tell us if it were possible to obtain them? In the first place, we should focus our attention on the point where the vertical to the next step begins, we should wish to know why the change occurred at that particular point. If the record for rates of type (c) were plotted on the same sheet as the record for rates of type (a), it may be that the move to the next step would take place a trifle sooner on the (c) graph than on the (a) graph. It would certainly be of interest to know whether the vertical distance between the two graphs is relatively great or small, and to know which graph moves upward or downward first. The probability is that the official minimum rate lags behind the average actual rate, but unfortunately we havenot the means of testing this assertion; official minimum rates do not change sufficiently often and particulars of average actual rates are not obtainable.

It would be almost meaningless to superimpose a graph showing the trend of general prices upon graph (a), or even upon a hypothetical graph (c), unless we were certain that just the full recognised time were being worked, ~~and~~ no

more nor less. The only fact that would emerge would be the well-known one that the index number for general prices may fluctuate greatly, and move upwards or downwards several times in a period while no corresponding change occurs in a minimum rate of wages. This would indicate that trade union minimum rates lag a long way behind price movements (1), but would not prove that any class of worker is "worse off" as a result, for reasons already intimated. Prices might conceivably follow <sup>rates</sup> wages/closely by remaining fairly stable over a period of time; but at the same time, if trade were slack and recourse to short-time working became necessary, the actual wages earned would fall short of the minimum rate for a complete week and the worker would then be at a disadvantage.

It seems to have become the practice to quote index numbers, such as are envisaged in this analysis, without fully appreciating the limitations and qualifications attaching to them. If an investigator is dealing with a trade in which piece work preponderates, he is still more liable to commit errors, and to be lacking in the requisite supply of information. It has been suggested above that even for piece workers there is some sort of rate of remuneration corresponding to a minimum time-rate, and that this fact does not render the statistician's task any more difficult. But there is one difference. Usually one is able to get some idea as to whether an established minimum time-rate tends to become the

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(1) Unless the minimum rate includes a bonus which varies according to a cost of living index number.



actual time-rate, in any trade. If the actual rates exceed the minimum, one can usually gain some rough impression as to whether the average excess is 5, 10, 15 or 20 per cent; but in a piece-work trade not even is a rough guess within the bounds of possibility. We learn that as a rule a pieceworker sets his own standard, and works at such pace and at such intensity as will yield him round about a certain weekly sum which he has in mind. But we do not know what that sum is. A knowledge of actual piece work prices does not render much assistance in this direction, for although earning capacity is dependent upon the magnitude of the piece work prices, it does not follow that changes in piece work prices lead to proportionate changes in earnings. For example, if a piece price were reduced from 1/- per gross to 1ld. per gross, it is by no means the case that earnings would necessarily fall from 36/- to 33/-, because some modification may have taken effect in the method of production so that extra facilities would enable the worker to earn just as much at 1ld. per gross as he did formerly at 1/- per gross. Even when the change in piece price has not been occasioned by some change in the method of operation, a piece worker if he had not previously been working at full intensity may still be able to earn the same weekly wages. Supposing that we could rely upon a certain piece work price to yield to the "ordinary" or "average" worker a certain sum per week of 47 hours, and thereby arrive at a piece worker's normal weekly rate of wages, we still have no record of his weekly earnings when he is compelled to work

short-time or when he finds it necessary to work over-time.

Sufficient has now been written to demonstrate that few conclusions can be derived from wages statistics such as the outside investigator is able to collect, and to warn the unwary of the pitfalls that beset one on an excursion into such realms. The available statistics, in themselves, may not always lead anywhere, but if supported by further facts of non-statistical nature they may be pressed into service. For instance, the dates when changes in rates of wages take place are not without significance; the relative positions of different grades of workers as shown in rates of wages and any changes that have taken place in this connection within an industry, are worthy of consideration; comparisons between one industry and another may be fruitful of thought-provoking tendencies. Although the writer does not consider that index numbers for wholesale or retail prices are accurate and suitable measures of movements in the cost of living as far as any particular workman or even class of workmen is concerned, he recognises that in the long run, the trend of prices, when placed side by side with any available trend of wages, will reveal in a general kind of way at what periods a workman has found it difficult to "make the money spin", and at what periods he has been enabled to add comfortably to his items of expenditure. So it must not be understood that the writer is an advocate of throwing statistics overboard like so much waste ballast because they may not contribute to progress. By all means must the best be made of what is available, but at the same time it is to be regretted that more is not at the disposal of the seeker after truth.

(ii) The Trend of Wages in the Brass Trades.

Bearing in mind the pitfalls indicated in the first part of this chapter, we may now turn to the three main sections of the brassworking trades and sift the available information on the subject of wages covenants. Before the year 1872, it will be recalled that there was no trade union worthy of the name, and with the exception of the efforts of the Brass Cock Finishers' Trade Society in a small section of the brass trades, collective bargaining was an unknown quantity. Consequently there was no such thing as a minimum rate of wages. The first trade union rate was not established until the year 1897 when day-work rates for casters and moulders were included in the casters' minimum price-list. But as most casters were pieceworkers, this casters' rate of 36/- pay have borne only a remote relationship to the earnings of casters at the time. The moulder's rate was more likely to approximate to the actual rate, though it must be remembered that the caster paid his moulder out of his total piecework earnings, and there was no guarantee that the moulder would receive such a rate. Very little importance seems to have been attached to these two rates. The next minimum rate to be established was that of 24/3½ per week for all adult male workers of no matter what occupation or what degree of skill or what experience in the trade. To compare such an absurdly low minimum rate with any other rate subsequently established in the trade would be nothing short of ridiculous, because the majority of adult



workers were probably earning more than 24/3 $\frac{1}{2}$  in 1900 at the time of Sir David Dale's award. It cannot be said that there was any standard <sup>(1)</sup> minimum rates in these sections of the trade until 1910, when the Grading Scheme was adopted. There were four different rates fixed in that scheme, and in the following year an extension of the scheme added to the number of rates to bring the number up to seven, two of the extra rates being special rates for polishers. In 1911, new day-work rates for casters, moulders and getters-down were arranged. The next change took place in 1913 when the Grading Scheme underwent revision and all rates for dressers and finishers were increased.

Thus, it will be seen that in the pre-war period there had been little experience of minimum rates of wages. The fact that changes in the immediate pre-war period occurred within such a short space of time would seem at first glance to invalidate the statement already made that changes in rates of wages are not frequent events; but such assertion is not in any way impaired by these pre-war movements. Had there not been a rate unchanged for ten years previous to 1910? and daywork rates for casters and moulders unchanged since 1897? Besides, in a brand new scheme like the grading scale, there would be a tendency for tentative rates to be first of all

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(1) The term "standard" has never been adopted in the brass trades, because it was feared that such might convey the impression that the minimum rate was intended to institute a dead level for all workers. "Basis" rates or "minimum" rates are always used.

(1)  
 established, because the principle of a minimum rate was far from being firmly rooted at that date. Furthermore, it must be considered that in the two or three years following the institution of the scheme, conditions of trade were favourable, and increases in rates were only to be expected. It was definitely intended that the 1913 rates should be stabilized for at least three years. So, the rapid changes that did take place prior to 1914 must not be regarded as a normal state of affairs.

Still less normal was the course of events after 1914. The frequency of change during the war and post-war period was not exactly the same thing as alteration in basis rates, since the advances gained were never regarded as anything more than bonuses payable on account of the abnormal conditions of war-time. The change in basis rates came in 1919, and it was not until October 1922 that the frequent variations in bonus under the cost of living sliding scale came to an end. From the commencement of 1922 the bonus had been the same for all grades, and the agreement of September of that year fixed it definitely at  $17/7\frac{1}{2}$ , so that minimum time rates became basis rates plus  $17/7\frac{1}{2}$ . In April 1924 the bonus was increased to  $21/6\frac{1}{2}$ , and the resultant rates have remained unchanged for the past six years - further evidence to show that minimum rates of wages tend to be stabilized for fairly long periods.

(2) Although there were no established minimum rates

(1)  
proper until 1910, collective bargaining prior to that date had been responsible for general wage advances in the form of the percentage bonus. Such percentage bonus was applied to any rate of wages of type (b) as described in the first part of this chapter, and to any earnings on piecework prices (also fixed by individual bargain) for pieceworkers. The dates when changes in bonus took effect were:-

1872. Bonus first fixed at 15 per cent.

1879. Bonus reduced to 10 per cent.

1890. Bonus restored to 15 per cent.

1896. Bonus increased to 20 per cent.

1913. Bonus increased to 25 per cent. (for workers  
(2)  
other than casters)

But such a record does not signify that if a journeyman brass finisher were earning 25/- per week in 1870 as a day-worker or a pieceworker, that from 1872 to 1879 he would earn every week 25/- plus 15%, from 1879 to 1890 25/- plus 10%, and from 1890 to 1896, 25/- plus 20%. Quite apart from the fact that his length of service may influence his weekly rate of wages, there are three reasons why this should not be the case.

- (1) If he were a pieceworker, piecework prices for the work upon which he was usually engaged may have been varied in the intervening periods. We may

(1) The writer feels that the minimum rate of 24/3 $\frac{1}{2}$  fixed in 1900 can be hardly given the status of a properly graded minimum rate, such as is usually understood by a trade union rate.

(2) In view of the Grading Scheme minimum rates, this bonus of 25 per cent. loses much of its significance. Vide footnote on p. ~~216~~ 216.



recall, for example, that employers had made many reductions in piecework prices after the break of the boom of the early 'seventies, before the bonus was reduced to 10 per cent.

- (2) Although the percentage bonus was the basis of agreement between the union and a body of employers, it was by no means the case that the respective degrees of organisation were always strong. The union could not always compel non-associated employers to pay the bonus, neither had it much chance of holding sway over the small business concerns to the trade. We can point, for instance to the abject weakness of the union between 1883 and 1888, when the 10 percent. bonus almost disappeared in practice.

- (3) Supposing he were a pieceworker and no appreciable change in method of manufacture or changes in piece rates had been effected, his inclination to work, slackness of trade or pressure of orders would have a bearing upon his weekly earnings. These influences would similarly operate if he were a time worker. There were periods when trade was particularly brisk, although it may not have been so brisk in some sections as in other (e.g. 1896); there were likewise times when it was known that trade was generally very bad (e.g. 1886); and there have been stretches of time when trade has been

1832 were neither very active nor very slack, but just  
 indifferent.

different These three factors place a decided limit on the  
 usefulness of any record we may have. We have no knowledge  
 of reductions in piecework prices, as there never was a  
 uniform piecework price list in the finishing sections of the  
 trade, apart from the two isolated cases of hinge-dressing and  
 manufacture of sash-fasteners. Even were we in possession  
 of such a record it would be difficult to estimate the effect  
 on earning capacity, for reasons already given. The second  
 of the above qualifying factors may have been of far greater  
 importance in the earlier years of the union's existence,  
 although the trade union organisers has always had to contend  
 with the small master in the trade. Where union and non-  
 union men worked side by side in the same establishment, the  
 employer would not discriminate between one and the other. If  
 he withheld the bonus from non-union men on the grounds that  
 they were not covered by agreements in the trade, he would  
 simply drive the non-union men into the union. On the whole,  
 the trade union has been sufficiently powerful to secure general  
 payment of the bonus throughout the trades. As for the third  
 factor, we are able to get some sort of record of the periods  
 when short-time or overtime prevailed, but we cannot measure  
 the quantitative effect of these on earnings. The Brassworkers'  
 Society has from its inception provided an unemployment benefit,  
 but no record has been preserved from which to gain any idea of  
 the incidence of short or long period unemployment. From May

1893 onwards, we have the monthly reports given in the "Labour Gazette" on the state of employment in different centres in the different industries, this information being culled chiefly from trade union organisers who sometimes acted as correspondents in those localities. <sup>(1)</sup>

This "Labour Gazette" record provides a fairly satisfactory indication of the state of trade from month to month, but serves no statistical purpose. Besides, the complicated structure of the brass trades renders it difficult for us to deduce from this record that any particular class of worker was in a good or a bad position at any time, because, as has previously been pointed out, there were several sections of the brass trades and work may have been plentiful in one branch while at the same time scarce in others. It was frequently the case that the cabinet branch of the trade was experiencing a lean time while workers in other sections were fully employed. Depression in the building trades would bear differently on the several branches, and an exceptional occurrence like the great frost of 1895 would increase employment in the water fittings branch out of all proportion to general conditions of employment in the trade as a whole. There

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(1) Until January 1903 these monthly reports were given for different localities. After that date, they were given for different industries irrespective of locality. Reports for the brass trades were then given under "Miscellaneous Metal Trades". Later these were absorbed in "General Engineering Trades", and now no separate record of the miscellaneous metal trades is given. W. J. Davis served as correspondent for Birmingham from May 1893 to June 1897.



was, moreover, a seasonal swing in conditions of employment, more marked in some sections than in others. It was generally recognized that the brass trades were not so busy in the summer months as at other parts of the year.

So it must be admitted that for the period preceding 1910, we have only a scanty record of earnings and of rates of wages in the brass trades, and that for the years after 1910 although we know what minimum rates of wages were for different grades of labour, we are not cognizant of the relationship of actual rates to these minimum rates, neither have we any accurate idea of average actual earnings. Add to this some further obstacles, and it will be plain that it is extremely difficult to build up any record over a number of years. In the first place, the trades were largely ones in which piecework predominated, but it was piecework of a singular kind. The journeyman was the pieceworker, and the underhands were virtually timeworkers. The journeyman's earnings would vary within wide limits from one period to another, and there were several factors influencing the magnitude of his earnings, such as his own skill as a craftsman, his own ability in organising the work of his "gang", his bargaining power with employers and with underhands, the nature of his contract with the management and the kind of work upon which he was engaged. There need have been no correspondence between the weekly earnings of one journeyman and those of another engaged on similar work in the same establishment. Amongst underhands there may have been something approaching a general district rate, but even so,

degrees of skill and experience were so varied that there was a tremendous range of earnings among underhand workers. In any case, the journeyman was in a position to earn much greater sums than his underhands, although some of the latter may have been equally as capable as the journeyman himself. Even if we were in possession of adequate records, statistical presentation of them through the medium of averages would need to be supplemented by some measure of variability, in view of the wide range of earning capacity. For more recent years, when sub-contracting has become insignificant and when minimum rates are fixed, we are still faced with the fact that much of the work is on a payment by result basis, and we cannot estimate to what extent piecework earnings approximate to minimum rates.

Unfortunately, there are no reliable estimates of the respective proportions of timework and piecework. Roughly it may be taken that pieceworkers are in the majority; amongst male workers, perhaps 60 percent. or more are now working on a payment by result basis, and the percentage would probably be higher for female workers. The only official record with regard to this question is that given in the Sixth Report of the Earnings and Hours Enquiry made by the Board of Trade in 1906.<sup>(1)</sup> Returns of earnings were received on account of 8,112 workers in Brass and Allied Metal Wares. Of these, 69.7 per cent<sup>(2)</sup> were timeworkers and 30.3 percent. pieceworkers. These

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(1) Earnings and Hours Enquiry 1906. Report VI. Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades. Cd.5814 of 1911.  
 (2) Ibid. p.xliv.

returns were distributed between the sexes as follows:-<sup>(1)</sup>

BRASS AND ALLIED METAL WORKS WORKERS. 1906.

	Number.	Timeworkers per cent.	Piceworkers per cent.
Men	4220	67.6	32.4
Lads and Boys	1704	88.4	11.6
Women	1561	51.4	48.6
Girls.	627	79.1	20.9
Total.	8112	69.7	30.3

These figures do not give support to the foregoing assertion that piecework preponderates. But it must be remembered that this record relates to the year 1906, since which time, piecework has developed at the expense of timework. In 1906, the sub-contracting system was still a prominent feature, in the trade, and underhands would, in all probability, be returned as timeworkers. Since the decline of the journeyman system, although workers are still very much under the control of the foreman of the shop, they are often working by the piece, the management being fully aware of the piecework prices and of the amount of their earnings. A factor which has contributed to the growth of the amount of work done on a payment by result basis has been the ever increasing mechanisation of processes; whereby repetition work on standardized parts makes piecework operation a suitable method of working. This applies

(1) Ibid. pp.10, 14 and 15.



particularly in the case of unskilled and semi-skilled female machine-tool workers and stamp and press workers. The figures given above do bear out the statement that the proportion of pieceworkers to timeworkers is greater among women workers than among the men. It should be noted that although the extension of machine operation has demanded less skill from the brassworker, there are still many highly skilled jobs such as tool-making, tool-setting, pattern-making, plating and art bronzing, in which the work is usually on a time basis. The 1906 Enquiry was a national one, and for the brass and allied metal wares trade, separate district figures were not taken out, but the table given above may be taken as representing conditions in the Birmingham district only, since the writer is informed <sup>(1)</sup> that about 90 per cent. of the workers covered in the returns were working in the Birmingham and Black Country area. The Earnings and Hours Enquiry undertaken by the Ministry of Labour in 1924 was not designed so as to make any distinction between timeworkers and pieceworkers, and consequently gives no assistance in this direction. The report of the 1906 enquiry does reveal how we are liable to misrepresent the true state of affairs if we confine our wages record to timework only. For instance, the average weekly earnings of casters, which class formed about one eighth of <sup>(2)</sup> the male workers included in the return, were 30/11 for timeworkers and 44/8 for pieceworkers. Similarly, for dressers

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(1) By the Statistics Division of the Ministry of Labour.

(2) The probability is that the pieceworkers were the head-casters and the timeworkers, moulders and general helpers.

and finishers, who formed nearly three-sevenths of the males returned, the corresponding figures were 28/3 for timeworkers and 34/4 for pieceworkers. For Brass Turners, the figures were 28/7 for timeworkers and 32/10 for pieceworkers. Among the women workers, where particulars are given the difference between timework earnings and piecework earnings is not so great. For lacquerers, a class which accounted for between one fifth and one sixth of the adult females returned, average weekly timework earnings were 12/-, whereas pieceworkers earned, on the average, 12/3 per week.

Our record of the trend of wages in the brass trades is thus a very restricted one. For the period before 1910, we cannot follow the usual practice of recording the separate movements of wages for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, and for the period after 1910, while we are in a position to do this from our knowledge of graded minimum rates, we cannot assume that movement in rates correspond to movements in earnings or that rates approximate to earnings. For the period preceding 1910, we have occasional estimates of average weekly earnings supplied by private investigators and we have some record in the results of the Earnings and Hours Enquiry of 1906. The writer will endeavour to make the best use of the available material, gleaned from the various sources which have been indicated throughout these pages. For the whole period of this survey it will have to be assumed that rates and earnings are the same things, since we are not in a position to estimate the quantitative effect of short-time or overtime and all other factors

which have an influence on actual earnings. We are only in a position then to make comparisons between dates far apart, and consequently, the intermediate movements cannot receive attention.

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CHAPTER 12 (completed)The Trend of Wages in the Brass Trades.

The actual statistical records have been relegated to Appendix A, and the remainder of this chapter can only be a brief repetition of what is contained in the Appendix. Bearing in mind the fact that it was expected that the record would only tell us whether brassworkers were any "better off" at one period than at another, we may recapitulate some portions of the Appendix. In the 'fifties and 'sixties of last century brassworkers found it difficult to maintain their normal standards, because the trend of prices was upwards and rates of wages underwent little or no change. The early 'seventies brought some relief as far as rates of wages were concerned, but prices rose so rapidly then that workers would derive little if any benefit until the later years of that decade. Except for the working of short-time, the brassworkers would not appear to have suffered greatly in the 'eighties, although towards the end of the decade they may have found conditions against them. The 'nineties were altogether better years, for prices were falling until 1896, and when they reversed their direction about that date, brassworkers' wages moved forward also. The first ten years of the present century were not comfortable years, and it was not until the three years immediately preceding the war that brassworkers improved their position.

The war, of course, altered matters considerably, and as prices soared under the influence of abnormal forces, rates

of wages moved with a lag behind them. It was in these years that the lower grades of workmen improved their position tremendously. Not only was there general up-grading with the overthrow of the lowest grades, but there was a relatively greater increase in the rates of wages of the less skilled hands. As prices moved downwards rates of wages fell with them, but have never been at a very much higher level above 1914 than have general prices. Statistics certainly give the impression that the brassworker's "real" wages are higher now than in 1914, but it is hardly possible to state the extent of the improvement in figures, because rates of wages are not necessarily good guides to actual earnings and because the manner in which the weekly income is spent is subject to change in the long period. (1)

The statistical appendix shows us quite clearly how careful one must be in analysing any statistics of wages, and how inadequate are our sources of information on wages in these trades which do not always come before the public eye but which are, nevertheless, important. It is only with reservation that any opinion or impression should be stated unless the investigator is perfectly clear as to the meaning to be attached to the material at his command. That is why the statistical appendix and this present chapter may appear to be unfamiliar treatments of the subject of wages. The writer has felt compelled to make guarded statements only.

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(1) This was apparent in 1918 when the Sumner Committee on the Cost of Living carried out its investigations.

CHAPTER 18.

CONCLUSION.



## CHAPTER 13

### C O N C L U S I O N

It might well be asked whether our groping has brought us any nearer to the light, and whether we feel satisfied with the journey we have covered in the course of investigation. These questions could scarcely be met with a hearty reply in the affirmative. Yet if all we have accomplished is a mere recital of forgotten historical facts, the work were best not undertaken, and an attempt should be made to draw some inference from the facts which have been put together in the historical and descriptive account contained in the foregoing chapters. We may even raid the sanctum of the theorist and pass the usual strictures on his isolation and his disregard for actuality.

There are really two main aspects of wages to which attention might be given, viz. (1) the actual determination of the rate of wages to be paid for a particular kind of work, and (2) the settlement of differences between employers and workpeople and the removal of causes of unrest in industry. Both aspects result from the fact that a rate of wages is a price established by bargain between two parties; and although we may not, in our recital of historical facts <sup>have</sup> discovered anything about this process of bargaining that was not

known before, it can legitimately be claimed that what was known before, or at least felt to be true, has gained further support in the preceding pages.

Let us, first of all, turn our attention to the determination of the rate of remuneration, that is, to the making of the bargain. There are, as is well known, two types of bargain, (1) a bargain involving agreement to pay a certain sum of money for a certain amount of time worked by the ultimate recipient of that sum, and (2) a bargain involving agreement to pay a certain sum of money for a certain amount of product. In short, there is a time-work bargain and some sort of piece work bargain. There is no need here to debate the respective merits of these two types of wage contract, neither to expostulate upon the evils of sub-contracting. What may well be disputed is the implication of economic theory that equal skill and ability throughout a trade within an area where the labour force is mobile will be equally rewarded. It is questionable whether rates of wages, if left to free competitive individual bargaining would find their own level in accordance with the dictates of economic theory, given even the static conditions which that theory postulates. One of the principal aims of organised labour has been the securing of equality of reward for equality of skill and ability. This aim has manifested itself in the attempts of organised labour to establish minimum time-rates and lists of

minimum piece work prices. If equality would result in any case, why all the effort put forth by trade unions to establish minimum rates of wages?

Immediately we put abstraction on one side, we are bound to be faced with the problem of assessing the value of a man's work. Before any minimum rate of wages will receive recognition by employers, they will demand some standard by which a worker's usefulness may be judged. In any trade in which a long period of training is enforced, and in which that training will confer a measurable value upon a worker's skill, ability and general usefulness, then it is not difficult to come to some agreement with regard to the establishment of a minimum rate of wages. How otherwise can we explain the early success of trade unions in the engineering industry in this direction? But it is far more difficult in any industry in which the learning of a trade is left to chance, and in which there may be great diversity of skill among workers. The phrase 'minimum rate of wages' defies definition<sup>(1)</sup>, although it is usually thought to mean a rate of wages which guarantees a decent standard of living. Actually, however, an employer is much more concerned with a worker's general usefulness and with his standard of performance.

This was amply demonstrated in the Minimum Rate

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(1) The only definition is that contained in the Agricultural Wages Regulation Act 1924.



agitation in the Birmingham brass trades; no minimum rates were to be established until a grading scheme had provided working standards by which a worker's performance could be judged. There can be no doubt that grading in the brass trades has provided the remedy for inequality of remuneration for equal skill. In the same way, workers in the lock and key industry have found a solution of their difficulties. The needle and fish-hooks industry of Redditch has also adopted an elaborate grading scheme. Where work is of a varied character, where the products are numerous, where great diversity of skill is to be found, organised labour will find refuge in a grading scheme. Grading may be achieved by different means and according to different standards. An age qualification is usually the first essential, a factor which is completely ignored by economic theory. Experience in the trade is another. But grading really centres around capacity to perform certain operations, and in this connection it may even be necessary to relate those operations to the product. Whether the latter course is adopted depends upon the possibility of classifying the products. Classification is impossible in the brass trades, but has been done in the lock and key trade.

A further essential for the success of a grading scheme would appear to be that employers must seek the co-operation of organised labour. It is not absolutely

necessary for the trade union to undertake the actual grading of workers, provided that the trade union has an opportunity of contesting any grading status an employer may place upon a worker. At all events, it is highly desirable that in case of difference between a worker and employer, a worker should be afforded a fair chance of having his status tested in an impartial manner. Once grading has been done in the case of any particular worker, there are still likely sources of dispute. For example, difference may arise when a worker is of the opinion that he is sufficiently experienced and capable to be placed in a higher grade. Again, it ought to be clearly stated at the outset whether a worker who is of a certain grade can demand his minimum graded rate if forced to perform work which is normally done by a lower-grade worker. To what extent possible differences of this kind upset the smooth working of a grading scheme depends upon the spirit in which both employers and workers regard it. That personal element, which is disregarded by most theoretical economists, is not absent in differences of the kind referred to above. An employer may be quite prepared to pay a high grade man his proper graded rate even though such worker may be put to do low grade work. No grading scheme, however carefully devised, will be successful unless there exists goodwill and mutual understanding.

Piece work operation involves even greater

difficulties. In this case, it may be urged that a worker's general usefulness and ability is measurable and is reflected in the product of his labour. Thus, it should be perfectly simple, given the will for collective action, to secure agreement on a list of minimum piece work prices. The preceding account of wages and labour organisation in the brass trades will have shown, however, what conditions must generally obtain before any such list can be arranged. The products should be few in number and there should not be great variety in pattern. That is, there should be a sufficient degree of standardisation to be certain that the same minimum price is being paid for the same thing. More important even than this, methods of manufacture should be more or less the same throughout the trade. A commodity is the result of a combination of productive forces, of which manual labour is only one; and where the same result can be obtained by varying proportions of these productive forces, then, if uniformity in method of manufacture is non-existent, it will be an absolute impossibility to devise a uniform list of minimum piece work prices. In any case, if such a list is drawn up to cover the whole of a trade, it is bound to be complicated. But what method of paying wages does not appear complicated to the person not subject to it? A minimum piece work price list may not cover all operations and has often to be supplemented by arrangements for mutuality. In any case, whether a uniform list is devised or not, it is



felt that a piece worker should be guaranteed a minimum time-rate. The method of increasing or decreasing the general remuneration of piece workers by a percentage bonus is likely to be a failure unless a piece worker is guaranteed a minimum piece work price or a minimum time-rate of some kind.

That there should be a recognized minimum rate of remuneration for a certain standard of performance is therefore an accepted principle in the determination of wages under modern conditions, for where recognition of the principle could not be obtained in pre war days it has now been established. It is the most important idea underlying collective bargaining between employers and workpeople, an idea which has done much to introduce fairness in the distribution of incomes to the labour-supplying element in production. But according to what principles is any minimum rate of wages fixed? How does an employer regard any demand for an increase in the rate? Grading, in itself, is nothing more than the fixing of the relative positions of different classes of workers; the arrangement of a piece-work price list, in itself, is nothing more than the fixing of the relative positions of different operations. There is still the problem of determining how much shall be paid to a worker of any particular grade or of determining what any particular piece work price should be. In this connection, economic theory takes us so far,

but not far enough. There is a limit beyond which an employer will not pay, where he is approaching a zone of indifference. That is, an employer will cease to employ the worker who presses him beyond that limit, and will either cease production altogether in that direction, or will adopt some other method of manufacture which will necessitate a rearrangement of the manner in which productive agents are combined. That is the basis of modern productivity theories with their complements of variation and substitution.

But is the limit set by marginal net product as precise as economic theory would have us believe? Do not the assumptions underlying theory invalidate the theoretical explanation of economic action in so far as wages are concerned? The idea that labour is immobile has long proved a thorn in economic analysis. There are other thorns which prick occasionally, and cause us to wonder whether wages and other working conditions are the result of laws such as theory attempts to formulate, and whether chance after all does not play a greater part than can be admitted by rigid theory. Theorists have spent much time in endeavouring to impute an economic valuation to the several 'producer's goods'. Is it any less difficult to impute an economic valuation or even a subjective valuation to a part of any productive agent? The point is : supposing it takes ten workers to produce a certain article in conjunction with certain other productive agents, even if it is possible to impute a value to each

of the productive agents, of which the combined labour of the ten workers is one, is it possible to impute a value to each of the ten workers' contributions? The ten workers may be performing different tasks and working with different proportions of groups of other productive agents. Supposing that the total amount of product is  $x$  articles, and an exchange value can be ascribed to these  $x$  articles, does economic theory tell us in a satisfactory manner what proportion of that price is due to labour, what proportion to capital, and so on? Supposing the division is settled as theory would have us believe, can any satisfactory principles be given to explain how the portion of the price ascribable to the ten workers should be divided between the ten? The account of the old system of sub-contracting has shown that an employer's main concern is with the total labour cost involved in a given order. He is not very much interested (or, at least, was not) in the number of workmen who shared in the amount allocated to labour. It is difficult enough when one article only is being considered, and this condition seems to be assumed in theoretical discussions. How much more complicated does the imputation of economic values become when any particular worker may be engaged on several articles in the course of the day or week or month or whatever time economic theory has in mind! Which reminds us that the time element receives insufficient attention by the theorist.



The theorist ultimately takes refuge in the laws of demand and supply to explain the apportionment of the 'wages bill' among the workers who form the labour supply. The real fact is that supply or demand, and skill or ability are only two of the qualities which have a bearing upon the amount of wages actually paid. There are other qualities which should be taken into account,<sup>(1)</sup> but as some of these are intangible and quantitatively immeasurable, it is extremely difficult to accommodate them in any theory of wages.

Theories which have treated wages as a residual element have been generally discarded. Yet there are indications of a practical nature which lead us to the belief that if the determination of wages were left to free competitive individual bargaining, wages would tend to be the residual element, because the individual worker is at a disadvantage in the making of the bargain. How otherwise can one explain the unfortunate experiences of the lock and key makers in the old days of very small business concerns? But to admit that wages form a residual element under certain conditions of bargaining is not to give the whole truth. If wages were the only residual element, one would expect that at a time when general exchange values were rising, workers would be the first to gain. It is only too well known that this is not

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(1) Vide. Spicer - "British Engineering Wages", p.117.

the case. Economists have taken a long time to make up their minds whether movements in general exchange values determine the course of wages, or whether movements in wages determine the course of exchange values. The former view is now fairly generally accepted, although wage-fixing authorities are never able to give expression to it in arriving at decisions. They are so unable because there is obviously a modicum of truth in the alternative view and in the opinion of an employer of labour, a vast amount of truth in it. Wages are an item in the expenses of production, expenses of production influence selling prices. If an increase in wages is passed on to selling prices, with no reduction in the absolute shares paid to the owners of other productive agents, there may result a curtailment of demand, and a falling off in employment. Thus, the problem which presents itself to any wage-fixing body and which is ever present in collective negotiations between employers and workpeople, is : how far can wages be increased without causing too violent a dislocation in demand and in general market conditions? This was always a strong plank in the claims made at various times in the Birmingham brass trades. Wages do not form the only residual element in the distribution of wealth. The shares of all agents of production are capable of being residual, and the extent to which they are so depends upon the relative bargaining strengths of the owners of those

agents.

At the commencement of these investigations, there was a vague suggestion that there might be some connection between the size of the business unit and the relative level of wages. The preceding pages lend some support in this direction, especially the account of conditions in the lock and key trade. The history of collective bargaining in the brass trades also adds colour to the possibility. Where conditions of manufacture are such that it is comparatively easy for a man to set up in business on his own account, or with a small number of employees, and where the amount of capital required is small, competition is keen, and both profits and wages will be kept at fairly low levels, even though the skill of workers in the trade in question may be on a par with that in other trades in which the wage level is higher. If recent definitions of a 'fair wage' be accepted, then workers in such a trade in which small masters abounded were not receiving a fair wage.

It is not wise to link up a conception of this kind with the theoretical conception of the 'representative' firm, since one cannot demonstrate in practice what the representative firm is. In the Birmingham brass trades, large and small firms have existed side by side, and the latter have been able to compete successfully; so successfully in fact that larger firms have found it profitable to give out orders to the small specialist concerns. The smaller



firms have the benefit of what are generally called 'external economies', in the form of metal supplies in the district and of a mobile labour supply. It is to 'internal economies' that one must turn to find an explanation of the survival of the small business unit in the Birmingham brass trades. Machine production has not been found profitable in all cases, and even in the casting processes where machine-moulding may have taken the place of hand work, there is still much odd-work to be done. This has tended to keep in existence the small outcasters, who are capable of doing this work for the larger firms. It has been seen that hot stampings have taken the place of many parts which were previously cast. But instead of the larger firms in the brass trades undertaking this work and thereby causing the smaller brass founder to fall out of the competitive struggle, the work has been turned over to the specialist firm producing stampings for the trade. The prospect of having to meet burdensome overhead costs precludes the brassfounder from engaging in the work himself, since such processes are not profitable unless there is a large and continuous output. Thus, the small firm may remain. The smaller unit may also remain as a subsidiary and auxiliary to other trades in the district, producing certain components and parts for incorporation in some composite product requiring expensive capital equipment. It is very questionable, then, whether there is such a firm as a 'representative' one in the brass

trades, since the theoretical conception of a 'representative firm' rather implies that only one article of a particular quality is being produced. If the 'representative firm' is intended to be related to size, then obviously there cannot be anything like a representative firm in the brass trades because size depends upon the number of lines of manufacture a firm wishes to take up. This observation would apply in many other trades as well. Theory refers primarily to the cost of production per unit of output, and thus labour cost is per unit of product. How exactly can theory be justified and be held to depict actual conditions when several lines of manufacture may be passing through the workshop at the same time?

There are bound to be differences in efficiency among firms, and the proportions of capital equipment to labour force will differ from firm to firm. Under conditions of free competitive individual bargain in the labour market, the less efficient firms can make up for their disadvantage by paying lower rates of wages than the more efficient firms. Organised labour, in its endeavours to establish minimum standards throughout a trade has thus performed a service to industry which often escapes the notice of those whose attention has been drawn mainly towards supposed restrictions of output promoted by trade union working conditions. The service lies in the facts that the worker must reach a standard of efficiency before being entitled to

at least a certain rate of wages and that, in so far as the establishment of minimum standards with regard to wages and working conditions reduces the possibility of wages becoming the residual element, an employer must look towards improvements in the organisation of his business when more efficient firms enter the lists or when the market turns against him. In the old days, wages suffered the first blow; nowadays, economies must be sought in other directions. Therefore, trade unions run the risk in maintaining the standards they have established of fostering unemployment. That trade unions should openly pursue such a policy has been advocated in a recent work on the subject of wages in theory and practice.<sup>(1)</sup> To what extent a policy of this kind is desirable depends upon the ease with which a displaced labour supply can be re-absorbed, either in its own trade or in any other. To what extent such a policy is practicable depends upon two criteria, whether the trade union has knowledge of the approximate level of that upper limit at which the law of substitution begins to operate, and whether the trade union is strong enough to impose its will upon all workers in the trade. The thesis mentioned above presumes a strength of organisation which does not exist even yet. It is still true that some workmen prefer to accept a rate of wages

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(1) J. W. F. Rowe. "Wages in Practice and Theory".



which is below the trade union minimum standard, to walking the streets and drawing State or union unemployment benefit. At least, this would appear to be the case in the metal trades of Birmingham and District.

Allusion has been made to the possible dilemma into which one may be led by relating wages to general price levels. Yet in recent times wages and 'cost of living' have been actually associated in order to arrive at some sort of adjustment to a more normal state of affairs following complete anarchy in the movements of general prices during and after the war. The reference to 'cost of living' is by no means new as far as wages questions are concerned. History would supply us with numerous examples of claims by dissatisfied workers for advances in wages on the grounds that the prices of provisions had shown a tendency to rise. That was one claim made by the brass workers in 1872. On each occasion when brass workers were advocating certain claims before an impartial arbitrator, 'cost of living' occupied some part of the proceedings. It was always a question of how a certain sum of money could be utilised to provide a living for a family of a certain size. In the regulation of wages in Australia this method of regarding wages has received much attention, and the workman plus wife plus three children has been regarded as the average family for adjusting minimum rates of wages to working class

needs. Yet, although we have been prepared to say that there should be some lower limit beyond which wages should not fall in order that a workman and his family may live in reasonable comfort, we have never fully reconciled ourselves to the belief that needs vary between family and family. If we really took the 'cost of living' idea to its logical conclusion, then we could not possibly find any reason for rejecting any scheme of family endowments or for advocating that a married man is not entitled to a higher wage than a single man. For the working man, that may be an equitable arrangement; but how is the wage of a female worker, married or single, to be determined? Can our system of distributing wealth admit of different principles for different types of workers?

The relation between wages and prices is constantly being stressed by those who follow the course of 'real' wages. How often is it said that the workers are so much 'better off' than at some previous date, because statistics show that they can purchase as many pounds of this and as many pounds of that at less cost than before! As if a certain household budget were always to be the standard from which a working man may not move! In considering the distribution of incomes in general, we never endeavour to relate incomes to needs for all classes in the community. 'Cost of living' sliding scales are very well in a way, but their only service would seem to lie in

their powers of adjustment at times when monetary policy or some accidental and extraneous circumstance completely upsets the equilibrium of general prices so as to send them either soaring rapidly to unprecedented heights or skittling down a very steep slope. In the ordinary course of events it is questionable whether a 'cost of living' sliding scale is to be recommended. Not only does it add another element of uncertainty and risk in the making of business contracts, but it also assumes that a worker should not move away from a certain standard of living and should not be given an opportunity of improving it. It is a well recognized fact that certain everyday household requirements are cheaper in the summer months than in the winter months. But is there any reason why (to take the example of the metallic bedstead industry) a workman should lose 2/- a week in the summer months just because butter or milk or some other foodstuff has suffered a seasonal fall in price? This principle is much too arbitrary to be applied to all classes of the community, and in so far as it would never be so applied, is inequitable and unjustifiable. Family budgets and cost of living index numbers are as yet much too imperfect to permit of such methods of wages regulation.

The true relationship between the distribution of incomes and movements in the general level of prices has yet to be discovered. One thing seems clear at the



present time; viz. that there are two main principles in our minds when we are focussing attention upon the distribution of wealth. The first is that an individual should get only as much as he deserves, only as much as he is worth: and the second is that he should get a share of the 'national dividend' proportionate to his needs. These two principles are irreconcilable, although distribution of wealth seems to be conducted according to some principle which resembles a tangled mixture of the two. The first principle, working alone, brings poverty and riches in sharp contrast; the second implies a complete overthrow of the existing social system, for it is perfectly reasonable for a working man to need an expensive seat at the opera house, or a seat in the stand at the races, or a motorcar. Organised collective bargaining, State regulation, supply and demand, trade union working rules, have all introduced compromises which render it almost impossible to detect either principle or system in the determination of wages. Thus, when one places the theoretical text-book alongside any account of actual conditions as found in the workshop, it is difficult to trace any show of resemblance. The text-book can only outline or suggest tendencies; it does not supply scientific laws and principles.

Some of the considerations which influence the employer when confronted with demands for increased

wages have already been noted, but at least two need to be emphasized. We are not always in a position to discover what considerations do influence employers, except when wages are discussed in public at arbitration proceedings. If employers are asked why they are not prepared to concede a general advance in wages, they invariably answer that it would be necessary to pass any increase on to the consumer in advanced selling prices. They fear that this will curtail demand. Even if business is good at the time a claim for an advance is made, the answer is very similar, except that employers reply in the strain that it is extremely doubtful how long such favourable trade conditions will continue, or they say that they must be recouped for previous losses. This is the general tendency among employers. The remuneration to labour must come last on the list and the remuneration for other agents of production must be safeguarded. There is no moral justification for such an attitude, for labour is as necessary as any other agent. The fact that such an attitude is adopted does show, however, that production, exchange and distribution are not water-tight compartments, that value is at the root of all our social problems, and that whenever the distribution of wealth is called in question, the battle is bound to be waged around the ownership of the means of production.

The other point which should be stressed, and one which has been revealed both in the wages negotiations affecting the trades dealt with in the preceding pages and in the history of Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board, is that often an employer is prepared to pay a better wage provided he is satisfied that his competitors in business are being made to pay a similar wage for a similar class of work. The legislature has failed to recognize this fact. The Trade Board system gives expression to it, and then one is aware that such was not the primary motive underlying the setting up of Trade Boards. Legal sanctions had to be introduced in the Trade Board system, because no moral sanction could be invoked to safeguard the 'sweated' worker. Yet Whitley Councils were not given Statute Book authority, and we have adhered strictly to the 'laissez-faire' doctrine of the nineteenth century that it is wrong for the state to regulate wages and to enforce payment of any recognized district or national rate of wages, even though the State welcomes the establishment of machinery for facilitating the determination of any such recognized rate. It would be incorrect to assume that organised labour is strong enough in every instance to secure the general payment of a recognized rate of wages, and that the moral sanction favoured by the 1894 Royal Commission on Labour is sufficient. This point need not be laboured. The Birmingham brass trades



are probably not the only ones in which employers have said that they would be prepared to pay higher wages if the trade union could control all the labour in the trade. Yet, although such a view must have been expressed over and over again, there has never been general acceptance of the idea that a rate of wages or an advance in wages, secured by collective agreement, should be legally binding on all persons in the trade. The clamourings of Joint Industrial Councils themselves for legislative effect to such a proposal are like voices in the wilderness - unheard or quietly ignored.

One has to wonder whether the actual machinery for adjusting differences and arranging general standards is so very important after all. The spirit is of greater moment than the constitution. There is no Industrial Council in the brassworking trades, yet differences are settled at a round-table talk. There is a Joint Industrial Council in the metallic bedsteads industry, yet it has not superseded the old Conciliation Board, and non-associated employers are represented on it. There has been no big strike in the bedstead industry since 1908, and, omitting the 1920 strike, there has been no big strike in the Birmingham brassworking trades since 1890. There is a Joint Industrial Council in the lock and key trade, but there have been occasions when it has been inactive, and it has at times experienced difficulty in securing

respect for its decisions. In this industry, the Council is merely the old Wages Board under another name.

The real value of machinery of the conciliation board or Whitley Council type lies in the opportunities afforded for each side to better understand the attitude of the other. It is not absolutely essential that every employer should belong to an employer's association, but such an association should contain the majority of employers in a trade if collective agreements resulting from the existence of the organised body are to be effective. But collective agreements, no matter how arrived at, are likely to fail in their purpose if employers who do not wish to associate themselves with an organisation refuse to respect the terms of agreement. It is not always the non-associated employer who is recalcitrant; a member of an organisation may not be prepared to pay an agreed rate of wages. Much of the unrest in industry is attributable to this cause. There are always some employers who refuse to conform to an agreement regarding an advance in wages, and in waiting until they are forced to fall in line, they engender unrest. Employers are only too ready to point to lack of solidarity among workers, and this, of course, must be admitted. There are always workers who will go behind the back of the trade union and accept conditions which are not up to the agreed standards. But primary responsibility for this must rest with the

employer, since he places temptation in the way of the worker by offering him such conditions. In these cases, it has to be the agreed rate for a certain standard of proficiency, or failing the latter, a lower rate. Refusal to accept the lower rate spells dismissal.

There are those who say that such requirements are perfectly reasonable, and that collective agreements with regard to minimum working standards thus promote efficiency of workmanship. The latter cannot be denied, but our difficulty lies in our lack of knowledge of the expected standard of proficiency. Theory has taken us up to the field but has so far failed to open the gate which leads into the field. This so called standard of proficiency is that upper limit, that point of marginal net product about which we know so very little. History, description and statistics have been called upon to go hand in hand, but statistics have proved to be of less service than was perhaps expected. The fact is that statistics are not companionable or communicative under the shadow of the hedgerows along the main roads; they are capable of being more informative in the full sunshine of the open fields where trespassers may not set foot. The main roads are Blue Books, newspaper columns and historical facts; the field is the workshop and all those considerations which influence an employer when he stubbornly refuses to increase any piece work price by a fraction of



a penny or to agree to John Jones being moved up from Grade C to Grade D, or when he installs a new machine and decides that the piece work price must be reduced by a certain figure. Statistics such as are provided in Appendix A and in Chapter 12 are no better than historical descriptions, they are merely main road features, visible to all and helpful only in minor degree to some. The economist professes not to attempt to portray what his idealism urges him to say 'ought to be', and he purports to describe and explain what 'is'. He is criticized openly for failing in that aspect of his interests, but the truth is that he is never given full opportunities of discovering what 'is', and statistics are not likely to be of service until he gets those opportunities.

## APPENDICES.

**APPENDIX A.**

**STATISTICAL SURVEY  
OF**

**THE TREND OF WAGES IN THE  
BIRMINGHAM BRASS TRADES.**

**1880 - 1929.**



## APPENDIX A.

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### Statistical Survey of the Trend of Wages in the Birmingham Brass Trades. 1850-1929.

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It is no easy matter to build up a statistical record relating to wages, since sources of information are not plentiful. Such sources as are available have been pointed to in Chapter 12, so that preliminaries may be dispensed with and the record set under way.

The first record available relates to the year 1850, when a writer in the "Morning Chronicle" supplied the results of his investigations into the trades of Birmingham.<sup>(1)</sup>

For the brass trades as a whole, wages were given as follows :-

<u>Male Workers</u>	<u>per week</u>
Metal Maker (Strip caster) (not a numerous class)	30/- to 40/-
Modellers (Pattern-makers)	35/- to 50/-
Moulders (Casters)	About 30/-
Chasers	25/- to 36/-
Fitters (assisted by boys)	22/- to 25/-
Burnishers (polishing)	20/- to 30/-
Dippers	Average 25/-

<u>Female Workers</u>	
Lacquerers	Women About 10/-
	Younger girls 4/- to 7/-
Chargers (solderers in the making of tubes)	6/- to 8/-
Wrappers	Average 10/-

Rates were also given for the various sections of the trade,

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(1) "Labour and the Poor." Op. cit.

and for the main branches, these were :-

Cabinet Branch:

per week

Journeyman (with 6 under hands)	35/- to 50/-
Do. (with 2 or 3 boys)	26/- to 31/-
Single handed	20/- to 24/-
Boys (10 to 15 years)	3/- to 6/6
Do. (15 to 18 years)	10/- to 15/-

Lamps and Chandelier Branch:

Head of a "gang"	as much as 40/- to 60/-
Journeyman pieceworker	average 35/- to 40/-
Underhand	20/- to 25/-
Dayworker	About 21/-
Boys (10 to 15 years)	2/6 to 8/-
Do. (15 to 18 years)	8/- to 12/-
Men (on brass candlesticks)	25/- to 26/-

Cookfounding Branch:

Finisher (with assistance of boy)	25/- to 30/-
Do. (single handed)	20/- to 25/-

Rates of wages in some of the smaller branches of manufacture were also stated, and in general these do not vary greatly from those in the main sections. The average rate for a caster would be in the neighbourhood of 30/- and that of a finisher about 20/- to 25/- per week.

The next record of this kind that we are able to draw upon is for the year 1865, when Aitken made references to wages in his excellent contribution to the "Midland Hardware District", edited by the celebrated local historian, Timmins. It is possible that the rates of earnings given in this source represent those obtained in the best and largest establishments, but they must be taken as they are. For the trade as a whole, we are only given two rates :--

Pattern makers 30/- to 60/- per week.

Chasers (and Repairers) 30/- to 50/- " "

Between 1850 and 1865, then, the patternmaker's earnings would not seem to have changed very much, but for chasers the rates at the later date are distinctly higher. The rates for females are given under the different sections of the trade, but we may extract them as general rates.

Lacquerers	Women	8/- to 10/- per week.
	Girls	3/- to 5/- " "
Solderers (on tubes.)		10/- to 12/- " "
Wrappers-up		8/- to 10/- " "
Presswork		8/- to 12/- " "

There seems to be little change between 1850 and 1865 in these female rates, except perhaps in the case of women engaged in soldering along the seams of brass tubes, for which the rates are higher at the later date.

For the various sections of the trade, the rates were :

<u>Cabinet and General Brassfoundry Branch:</u>		<u>per week</u>
Journeyman pieceworker	Best work	35/- to 50/-
Dayworker	Good workman	25/- to 30/-
	Secondary do.	15/- to 25/-
Boys		3/6 to 7/-
Lads		7/6 to 10/-

Gasfittings Branch:

Workman working separately	25/- to 35/-
Dippers and Bronzers	20/- to 25/-
Boys	3/6 to 6/-
Lads	7/6 to 17/-

Cockfounding Branch:

After paying underhands	42/- to 45/-
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There is nothing in these figures to show that the general



range of earnings was any different in 1865 from conditions in 1850, except perhaps in the cockfounding section where earnings appear to be superior at the later date. More prominence is given in these records to stamped brassfoundry, and rates in this section were given as :-

Stamped Brassfoundry:

per week

Experienced stamper (male)	30/- to 40/-
Men who raised the "ram"	15/- to 18/-
Annealers (attended to muffles)	15/- to 18/-
Fitters (did the burnishing)	20/- to 30/-
Dippers	20/- to 25/-

Here again is further evidence to show that conditions were much the same in 1865 as they were fifteen years before.

In a series of articles <sup>(1)</sup> dealing with the trades of Birmingham as they were in 1871 written by a correspondent for the "Birmingham Morning News", conditions in the brass trades are described, and two references are made to earnings of workers. They were both low average figures and probably were underestimates. These were:

Cabinet work	16/- to 18/-
Lamp work	20/- to 24/-

There is no doubt that earnings in the cabinet branch were lower than in other sections, and perhaps the range of 20/- to 24/- given for the lamp trade may have been a fair representation of an adult underhand's weekly earnings at that time.

During the course of arbitration proceedings in 1879,

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(1)

"Pictures of the People." Newspaper Cuttings.

references to earnings were bound to be made. At that time, of course, there was a bonus of 15 per cent. It is doubtful, however, whether the underhands were in a much better position than in the 'sixties. The writer will follow the same plan as above and allow the references to speak for themselves. One employer had taken the trouble to average the earnings and hours of labour of the 73 adult hands he employed in one out of three establishments owned by the firm. The average earnings, inclusive of bonus, were 23/11½ per week, but full time had not been worked. The average number of hours per man per week were at that same time just over 43, representing about five days' labour. Thus if full time had been worked, the average weekly earnings would probably have reached to 28/- or 30/-. The foremen's earnings were much higher, in some cases being as high as 50/- or 60/-. From the cases cited during the proceedings, 30/- appears to have been the representative figure for adult hands at that date. It will be remembered that W. J. Davis assumed this to be the case in his demonstration of how a workman might have spent his weekly wages. Casters were usually in receipt of higher earnings than these, their earnings ranging from 35/- to 40/-. The underhands were still, at that time earning anything from 18/- to 25/-. Rates for females were much higher in 1879, being 14/- to 15/- compared with 8/- or 9/- in 1869. Boy labour was likewise dearer, 6/- to 9/- compared with the 3/- or 4/- or 5/- previously. Although the year 1879 marks the point at

which the bonus was reduced to 10 per cent. it would not denote the highest level to which earnings had gone in the 'seventies. The best times would have been in 1872, 1873 and 1874, when much overtime was worked. The increase that had occurred in rates for boys and females were not attributable to the bonus, but the men must have gained by the bonus in spite of the fact that piecework prices had in many cases been reduced after 1875.

Information is rather scanty for the period between 1879 and 1900. The wages census of 1887 did not give much attention to the brass trades. Some official papers published in 1887 contain some references to the wages of brassworkers, but they are not of much service. In 1886, Giffen had collected together certain official returns of wages that had been made between 1830 and 1886, and these were collated in one volume.<sup>(1)</sup> These returns are not likely to be very reliable, but the writer quotes them here for purposes of comparison.

Wolverhampton and Neighbourhood  
(Years 1840, 1850 & 1860) (2)

<u>Brass Cocks and Gasfittings:</u>	per week
Casters	28/-
Finishers	20/- to 30/-
Coremakers (women)	7/- to 10/-
Lacquerers (women)	7/- to 10/-
Boys	2/- to 10/-
Girls	3/- to 5/-
<u>Cabinet Brasswork:</u>	
Casters	25/-
Casters' Boys	3/- to 10/-
Finishers	16/- to 35/-
Finishers' Boys	3/- to 10/-
Coremakers (women)	6/- to 10/-
Lacquerers (women)	6/- to 10/-
Girl Lacquerers	3/- to 6/-

(1) "Labour Statistics. Returns of Wages published between 1830 and 1886." C. 5172 of 1887. (2) Ibid. p.203 (Contd.)



Birmingham and Neighbourhood 1866 (1)

Cabinet Section

per week

Casters (members of one team)	25/- to 30/-
Casters' boys and lads	5/- to 15/-
Lacquerers (women)	Average 9/-
Do. (girls)	" 4/-

These returns are only drawn from a very small number of workmen and cannot be taken as authoritative. This is shown by the record given in the same table for brass cock and gasfittings workers, 30 men and 48 boys. Of the men, 16 were principals earning from 25/- to 45/-, and 22 were undermen earning from 18/- to 22/-. The boys' earnings exhibited much variation. Among them

10	earned from	9/-	to	12/-
16	"	"	5/-	to 9/-
22	"	"	3/6	to 5/-

The figures given in these tables correspond generally to those of the other records, although the casters' figures of 25/- and 28/- in the table for Wolverhampton may be a trifle low.

The next table given in Giffen's collection also referred to Birmingham but related to the year 1880. In this case we have records for the three sections of the trade.

(Contd)...

Taken from "Miscellaneous Statistics," Part IV. 1862.  
p. 258.

(1)

Ibid. p. 203. Taken from "Miscellaneous Statistics,"  
Part VI. 1866. p. 286.

Birmingham and Neighbourhood 1880. <sup>(1)</sup>

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Lads &amp; Boys</u>	<u>Women</u>
<u>Cabinet Brassfoundry.</u>	per week	per week	per week
Casters	32/6	10/- to 15/-	
Dressers	24/- to 28/-	10/- to 13/-	
Dippers	21/- to 25/-		
Lacquerers			6/- to 11/-
<u>Chandelier Making:</u>			
Casters	37/6	10/- to 14/-	
Makers	35/-	10/- to 12/-	
Dippers	31/- to 34/-		
Burnishers	25/- to 40/-	8/- to 16/-	7/- to 13/-
Putters together	30/- to 36/-		
Lacquerers			7/- to 12/-
<u>Gas and Water Fittings Making:</u>			
Casters	35/- to 38/-		
Core makers	24/-		
Turners-over, pluggers & shapers	25/-	10/- to 12/-	10/-
Putters together	25/-		

This table again shows that the workers in the cabinet branch of the trade were not in receipt of such good earnings as those in other sections. It shows, furthermore, that boys' wages were higher in 1880 than at the previous dates for which we have figures. Rates, on the whole, seem also to be at a slightly higher level at this time.

The tables given in this collection of Giffen's for the engineering trades have rates for certain classes of brassworkers. Under "Machinery", rates for brass moulders

(1) Ibid. p.203. "Misc. Statistics." Part XI. 1883. p.427.

(casters) are given as 35/- per week for 1880,<sup>(1)</sup> and 34/- to 36/- for 1883.<sup>(2)</sup> In the "Railway Carriage and Wagon Building" establishments, rates for brass casters are not so great as this, being stated as 29/- per week for 1880<sup>(3)</sup> and 30/- for 1883.<sup>(4)</sup> We may gather then from these records, that in the period preceding 1870, there had been little change over twenty or thirty years, but that in the 'seventies there had occurred a fairly distinct upward movement. The range of earning capacity was so great that one cannot express the enhancement in terms of a percentage, but it is safe to say that underhands had not gained a proportionate share of the increase (apart, of course, from the very young underhands).

The Wages Census of 1887 does not help us very much in our quest for statistical data, although there is some corroboration for the figure of 30/- as an average rate of remuneration for a skilled brassworker. For Brass work and Metal Wares, the average earnings were :-<sup>(5)</sup>

Men	29/7	per	week
Lads and Boys	8/6	"	"
Women	12/11	"	"
Girls	6/2	"	"

In the engineering classes, a small number of returns for brass founders and brass finishers in the Midland district

(1) Ibid. Misc. Statistics. Part XI. 1885. p.423.

(2) Ibid. Returns from Chamber of Commerce and private firms.

(3) Ibid. Misc. Statistics. Part XI. 1885. p.433.

(4) Ibid. As for Footnote (2) above.

(5) "Labour Gazette". October 1895. p.306.



reveal a similar condition. For Cheshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire,<sup>(1)</sup> the average rate for brassfounders was given as 31/10, the range being from 30/- to 36/-, and for brass finishers, 31/-. In both cases, the number of instances from which the average is calculated is too small to give a really representative figure, and in any case, the workmen concerned were time workers. Although the range of earnings within the class may have been wide, actually the majority of the workers covered earned rates within 10 per cent. above or below the average. Another table<sup>(2)</sup> for the Midlands, based upon a larger number of cases may give a more reliable index. These figures also referred to time-workers, the averages being :

Brass Casters and Moulders	31/9 per week
Brass Finishers	27/5 " "

None of these figures could lead us to state that the 'eighties had brought any substantial change.

The next record we possess is the lengthy report of proceedings at the Arbitration of 1900. A general average means very little, but it will be recalled that the workmen were then striving for the recognition of a minimum rate for all adult brassworkers of 32/5, and the leader of the trade union estimated that in order to establish such a minimum, an average

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(1) Wages Census. 1887. Report for Manual Labour Classes. 1893. C. 6889. p. 42.

(2) Ibid. p. 96.

advance of 10 per cent. was needed for the trade as a whole, although in certain sections, less than this would have sufficed. In Chapter 5, a table has been prepared setting out the results of investigations made by W. J. Davis. This table shows that about 70 per cent. of the male underhands were in receipt, on the average, of  $27/3\frac{1}{2}$  per week, but that no record of the earnings of the remaining 30 per cent were given. It also showed that wages were higher than this in the plumbing branch of the trade (average of  $28/5$ ), and that they were lower in the cabinet branch (average  $25/8$ ). In the other branch, the chandelier and gas fittings section, the figure approximated to the general average, and was  $27/7\frac{1}{2}$ . From the many other references in the report of proceedings, the writer has framed the conclusion that underhands would form the bulk of those workmen who came within this 70 per cent, and that journeymen were probably earning the proposed minimum rate and more. There would undoubtedly be some underhands in the 30 per cent. and a few journeymen in the 70 per cent. Below is set out a list of rates earned by journeymen, taken from the evidence given at the proceedings. Some of these were rates for dayworkers, but the majority of them were for piecework.

33/-	36/-	29/5	42/-
34/-	33/8	40/-	34/9

Rates for underhands are given in several cases, these ranging from 20/- up to 30/-. The skilled moulder in the casting shop could probably earn as much as 30/-, but his foreman caster may easily be getting 40/- to 50/- a week. It depended

entirely on the class of work upon which he was engaged.

Such evidence as is available indicates that not only should the brassworkers be classified according to occupation, casters being placed at the head from the point of view of earning capacity, polishers next, and finishers and dressers last, but that a cross-classification would be necessary into journeymen and underhands. Furthermore, it appears from this record that earnings were higher in 1900 than they were in the 'sixties. The writer does not wish to be dogmatic, and he certainly is not going to attempt to construct any index numbers for earnings, but he will put forward the following tentative conclusions; that earnings advanced generally in the 'seventies, were maintained or fell away again slightly in the 'eighties, and advanced again in the 'nineties. There was obviously an advance in the late 'nineties, because the bonus was increased to 20 per cent. in 1896. These movements correspond to the general movements in trade activity. Putting the year 1900 against the year 1860, we may roughly sketch a quantitative comparison.

<u>Adult Males.</u>	<u>1860</u>	<u>1900</u>
Journeyman	30/- per week	35/- per week
Underhand	20/- to 25/- per wk.	25/- to 30/- p.w.

In making use of a "range of earnings" rather than a definite average figure, it is perhaps best to assume that the average would be nearer to the lower limit in the range than to the higher figure. The writer does not feel justified in making any quantitative comparisons according to occupation; he is



content to state the relative positions only.

The best statistical record we have is the report of the Earnings and Hours Enquiry of 1906.<sup>(1)</sup> In this enquiry, the Board of Trade obtained returns of the individual net earnings of workpeople for the last pay-week in September 1906, distinguishing between those who worked full time<sup>(2)</sup> and those who worked more or less than full time. For reasons already given in Chapter 12 (11) of the text, the results of the national enquiry regarding the industry specified as Brass and Allied Metal Trades may safely be taken as indicative of conditions in the Birmingham District only. The total number of workers covered by the returns was 8,112, and of these 4,220, i.e. 52 per cent were adult males; 1704 (21 per cent) lads and boys; 1561 (19.3 per cent.) adult women; and 627 (7.7 per cent.) girls, a proportion of 73 per cent. males and 27 per cent. females. Of the 4,220 adult males, 3002 worked full time, and the remainder more or less than full time. The range of earnings of those who worked full time may be judged from the following frequency distribution extracted from the report.

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(1) Cd. 5814 of 1911.

(2) It was not always possible to state whether pieceworkers worked full time.

## BRASS AND ALLIED METAL WORKERS

Weekly Earnings of Adult males who worked full time.  
1906.

## Grouped Frequencies.

Group Frequency	Number of Workers	Per cent.
Under 12/-	-	-
12/- & under 15/-	4	0.1
15/- " 20/-	121	4.0
20/-	529	17.6
25/-	704	23.5
30/-	699	23.3
35/-	445	14.8
40/-	234	7.8
45/-	91	3.0
50/-	74	2.5
55/-	29	1.0
60/-	43	1.4
65/- and over	29	1.0
Totals	3,002	100.0

The average earnings given in the report are 31/9 per week. This figure does not agree with the arithmetic mean or median calculated from the above distribution, but as it may have been calculated from all the recorded earnings and not from grouped frequencies, 31/9 had best be taken as the average full time weekly earnings of adult males. (1)

In a similar manner the report sets out a frequency distribution for the weekly earnings of the whole 4,220 men, whether full time or more or less than full time were worked. This distribution does not give as high an average as for full

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(1) The age of 20 years is taken as the adult age in the 1906 enquiry.

time, which would indicate that there must have been a number of men working less than full time in September 1906.

BRASS AND ALLIED METAL WORKS  
Weekly earnings of Adult Males (including those  
who worked more or less than full time.)  
1906.

GROUPED FREQUENCIES

Group Frequency	Number of Workers	Per cent.
Under 12/-	44	1.0
12/- & under 15/-	55	1.3
15/-	255	6.0
20/-	772	18.3
25/-	967	22.9
30/-	903	21.4
35/-	557	13.2
40/-	300	7.1
45/-	133	3.2
50/-	99	2.3
55/-	41	1.0
60/-	53	1.3
65/- and over	41	1.0
Totals	4,220	100.0

The average earnings for all adult males given in the report is 30/10, about 1/- less than the other average. The compilers did not proceed to the next step of discovering the average earnings of those who did not work full time. There is sufficient material in these two distributions to enable that figure to be derived. The arithmetic mean for those workers is about 29/-.

Thus, there are three averages :-

(A) 31/9, for those who worked full time exactly.



(B) 30/10, for all workers, whether they worked full time or not.

(C) 29/-, for those who worked more or less than full time.

What values from a statistical point of view may we place upon these different averages ? If we intend to take a long period view and wish to compare the average earnings of a brassworker in say 1930 with those in 1906, then the first average of 31/9, showing the average for a full working week is the only sensible figure to use. If we are more interested in the kind of living a worker is in a position to command at a given date, then the second average of 30/10 is perhaps the most suitable, since it represents the average weekly incomings for all the men workers, and it is what is actually received in wages each week that determines what the housewife is in a position to purchase. If one is desirous of estimating the incidence of short employment (or even the effect of overtime), then the third average of 29/- is of service. In this connection, it would really be of greater assistance to have separate averages for those who worked more than full time and for those who worked less. In a trade such as the brass trade this is of particular importance, since one section of the trade may be slack and another busy at the same time. This may likewise apply between workers in different occupations<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Evidence of this is contained in the report. The average earnings for different occupations were given, and in some instances the average earnings for those who worked full time or more or less than full time (i.e. Type B.

Averages of types (B) and (C) are more valuable for short period comparisons, and hence are not capable of being used to such a large extent as an average of type (A), since wages censuses cannot be taken every week, or every month or even every year. For our immediate purpose it is the figure of 31/9 which is most serviceable.

Similar tables and averages are given for lads and boys, for women, and for girls. The averages in these cases were

	Average	
	A	B
Lads and Boys	10/3	10/2
Women	12/-	11/7
Girls	7/-	6/10

The writer has not calculated a (C) average for these workers.

Yet another table in the report of the enquiry is of interest, since it tells us :--

- (1) The relative positions of different classes of workers.
- (2) Information as to the proportions of timework and piecework, showing the classes of workers who worked by time only, and those who worked by either system.

Contd....

average) exceeded the average for full time only (Type A.)					
e.g.	(A)	(B)		Timeworkers only.	(A) (B)
Foremen	44/3	44/5)	com- pared with	Casters and	
Fitters and Toolmakers	33/6	34/2)		Moulders	30/11 30/9
Warehousemen and				Dressers and	
Packers	27/11	28/1)		Finishers	28/3 27/7
Enginemen & Stokers	29/5	31/8)		Turners	28/7 28/1
General Labourers	19/10	21/7)		Others	27/11 27/8
(The tendency is the same for pieceworkers, but the difference between A and B is greater in each case, )					

(3) Some idea of the range of earnings.

The table is given in full below :--

OCCUPATION (main occupation only.)		Workpeople who worked Full Time					ALL WORKPEOPLE including those who worked less or more than full time	
		Number	Average Earnings for full time	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Number	Average earnings of all workpeople
MEN (of and above 20 years of age.)	Time	206	44/3	37/-	42/-	50/-	253	44/5
Foremen	Time	216	50/11	25/-	30/-	36/-	296	30/9
Casters (including Forehands & Helpers)	Piece	143	44/8	36/-	42/-	49/6	231	40/11
Dressers and Finishers	Time Piece	764 483	28/3 34/4	24/- 27/6	28/- 32/-	32/- 38/6	1108 649	27/7 32/7
Fitters and Toolmakers	Time	134	33/6	29/-	32/6	36/-	184	34/2
Turners	Time Piece	93 45	28/7 32/10	25/- 28/6	28/- 32/6	32/- 37/6	117 71	28/1 28/5
Warehousemen and Packers	Time	124	27/11	23/-	27/-	30/-	138	28/1
Enginemen & Stokers	Time	20	29/6	25/-	30/-	36/-	36	31/8
General Labourers	Time	78	19/10	18/-	19/6	21/-	116	21/7
Other Men	Time Piece	415 281	27/11 32/4	22/- 27/-	27/- 31/6	32/- 35/-	606 415	27/8 30/7
ALL MEN		3002	31/9	25/-	30/-	36/-	4220	30/10

BRASS & ALLIED METAL WARES  
Net earnings of workpeople in under-mentioned occupations in the last pay week in September 1906.



The classes with which we are most concerned are the casters and moulders, the dressers and finishers, the turners, the foremen, and the "other men". These form the greater part of the sample and the writer feels the urge to extract the figures for these classes and to determine the average for them only. The result can be obtained by multiplying the average given in each case by the number of workers in the class. Sum both number of workers and the resulting multiplication totals, and divide the latter total by the former. Actually, the result would not repay the trouble taken, for since 2646 out of the 3002 who worked full time are included within these main occupational groups, no great error is involved in abiding by the figure of 31/9 as the average for brassworkers proper.

In order that these figures may be compared with any that have already been given or that may be given later, it is necessary to combine the averages for timeworkers and pieceworkers into one average for the class, except in the case of casters where it may be assumed that the pieceworker would be the head caster and the timeworkers (on the whole) moulders and helpers. It may be that the majority of the other pieceworkers were journeymen, but there is no evidence of this fact. The results for the different occupations after combining the averages are :--

	<u>Arithmetic Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	
		<u>Time</u>	<u>Piece</u>
Foremen	44/3	42/-	-
Castors	44/8	-	42/-
Moulders	30/11	30/-	-
Dressers and Finishers	30/7	28/-	32/-
Turners	30/-	28/-	32/6
"Other Men"	29/10	27/-	31/6

For dealing with statistics of wages, the median is, in several respects, a more suitable type of average, but we have not sufficient material to combine the medians for timeworkers and pieceworkers. A glance at the median averages given in the list will show that they are, in all cases except one, less than the corresponding arithmetic means. For purposes of comparison with any other date, it is perhaps safest to take the median as the more representative average.

Similar types of tables are given for lads and boys, for women and for girls. Following the same procedure as for the men in combining the averages for timework and piecework, we may set out the results for purposes of comparison with other dates.

	<u>Arithmetic Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	
		<u>Time</u>	<u>Piece</u>
<u>Lads and Boys</u>	10/3	9/6	10/-
<u>Women</u> (1)			
Lacquerers	12/-	11/-	11/6
Burnishers and Polishers	13/7	12/-	14/6
Other women	11/9	11/-	11/6
<u>Girls</u>			
Lacquerers	6/9	7/-	
Burnishers and Polishers	6/10	7/-	
Other Girls	7/-	6/6	7/-

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(1)  
Of 18 years and over.

It will be seen from the table relating to adult male workers that there were certain occupations in which the method of payment was on a time basis only, but that in the occupational classes accounting for the majority of the workers included in the sample, both time work and piece work provided the method of working. Of the 4220 adult males, 727 were included in occupations subject to time work only; and of the remaining 3493, 60.9 per cent. were timeworkers and 39.1 per cent. were pieceworkers. The percentages are much the same in the case of those workers who worked full time only. The average weekly rate of wages (arithmetic mean) for all time workers who worked full time, as calculated from the separate averages given in the table, was  $29/10\frac{1}{2}$ ; and the average rate for pieceworkers was  $35/2\frac{1}{2}$ . Using weights of 7 and 3 for timeworkers and pieceworkers respectively,<sup>(1)</sup> we may combine these two averages to arrive at an average weekly rate of  $31/5$ . Figures of this kind certainly show what erroneous results may be gained if we attempted to unearth statistical conclusions from time-rates only.

Throughout the preceding pages it has been stated that there has always been a wide range of earning capacity in the Birmingham brass trades, and one naturally seeks confirmation of this in the Wages Census records. Observation of the

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(1) Of the 3002 workers, 2050 were timeworkers and 952 pieceworkers.



frequency distribution relating to the earnings of those adult males who worked full time shows that the total range was from 12/- to as much as 65/- per week; but 87 per cent. of the workers were comprised within the limits of 20/- and 45/-. It will be seen, however, that earnings within those limits were fairly widely spread, and that there was not a particularly strong degree of concentration about the average figure of 31/9. When it is considered that a wage differential of 5/- per week is relatively a large sum, then perhaps the frequency distribution may be allowed to tell its own tale. The other table with separate figures for different occupations also gives some indication of the range of earning capacity. The quartiles and the median have been given in each occupational class, and these may likewise speak for themselves. An interesting feature discernible in this table is that the range of earnings for pieceworkers is, on the whole, greater than that for time-workers. This is shown by a comparison of the semi-inter-quartile range in each case :-

OCCUPATION	Semi- Inter-quartile Range	
	Time- Workers	Piece- Workers
Dressers and Finishers	4/-	5/6
Turners	3/6	4/6
"Other Men"	5/-	4/-

The figures given in the 1906 Wages Census do not enable us to distinguish between journeyman and underhand, except perhaps in the case of the casting-shop, but a rough comparison with previous dates may be attempted. For 1887, the average weekly rate for adult males has been taken as approximately 30/- and as a comparison, a figure of 32/- may be taken for the year 1906. Thus, from the point of view of "money wages", there was a considerable improvement in the intervening 20 years (although it must always be borne in mind that 1887 was a year of very depressed trade.) From a small sample of earnings taken out by W. J. Davis in 1900, it was shown that about 70 per cent. of the adult males were earning on the average  $27/7\frac{1}{2}$  per week, and the remaining 30 per cent. were all earning 32/6d or more. That sample may not have been reliable, and there should hardly have been much change between 1900 and 1906. From the frequency distribution of earnings of adult males<sup>(1)</sup> who worked full time in 1906, a rough calculation may be made to show that either W.J.Davis' sample was not representative, or that there had been some improvement between 1900 and 1906. If it be assumed that of the 699 workers falling within the class "30/- to 35/-", half of them were earning some rate between 30/- and 32/6, then it can be deduced that 56.8 per cent. of the 3,002 adult males who worked full time were earning less than 32/6, which is distinctly better than the figure of 70 per cent. resulting

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(1) The adult age is regarded as 21 years in W.J.Davis' sample, and as 20 years in the 1906 Wages Census.

from W. J. Davis' smaller sample. The probability is that the sample submitted by W. J. Davis at the Arbitration of 1900 was not representative.

The report on the 1906 Wages Census also supplies tables showing the earnings of lads and boys, of women, and of girls. The results may be summarised as follows (for those who worked full time only).

	Arithmetic Mean	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Total Range
Women	12/-	10/-	11/6	13/6	5/- to 30/-
Girls	7/-	5/-	7/8	8/-	3/- to 20/-
Lads and Boys	10/3	7/-	9/6	13/6	3/- to 25/-

In each of the three cases there is a greater degree of concentration about the average than in the case of adult males. This is evident from the frequency distributions given in the reports.<sup>(1)</sup> Comparisons of these averages with those for 1887 show that the earnings of women workers were much the same in 1906 as in 1887, but that the earnings of both boys and girls had increased.

At the arbitration proceedings of 1907 there were casual references to earnings, some of which have been given in Chapter 5 (ii). One cannot arrive at any definite conclusions from so few a number of instances, but the general

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(1) It has not been considered necessary to give these distributions in this account.



impression does not, of course, differ from the more accurate statistical record for 1906. These years are rather significant because very soon afterwards the trade union was devoting considerable attention to the existence of "sweating", and both the union and the better class of employers made application for a Trade Board for the trade in 1909. It was probably true that in many cases workers were not receiving wages in proportion to their skill, but on the evidence contained in the 1906 record (and conditions would not be vastly different in 1909) it can scarcely be said that the brass trades, as a whole, were "sweated" trades. An average weekly wage of 32/- could not be regarded as unduly low relative to contemporary earnings in other trades. Of course, there were not likely to have been any returns of wages sent in by the smaller firms in 1906, and in consequence, the existence of "sweating" would in no way be exposed in the Wages Census. The remedies made available in the Trade Boards Act 1909 were really intended to aim at trades in which "sweated" conditions prevailed generally. This may have been a reason, in addition to those given in Chapter 6, why the brass trades were not scheduled under the 1909 Act.

The year 1910 brought the Grading Scheme which resulted in advances in earnings in many instances. The figures given in Chapter 6 provide some indication of the extent of the advances made, but they are insufficient to enable one to calculate the average percentage advance or to calculate

the average earnings, after grading had been accomplished. A knowledge of the actual minimum rates arranged in the 1910 scheme is of little service unless supplemented by figures showing the number of workers in each grade. It is safest to assume that the year 1911 marked the real time when rates of wages were advanced, for in that year the full effect of grading would have been felt, the new price list for castings came into operation, and the polishers gained their higher rates and status. If the lowest rate of 22/6d (improvers' rate) and the highest rate of 52/9 ("fine" caster's rate) be excluded, an unweighted average of the remaining eleven minimum time-rates yields a figure of approximately 36/-. This figure cannot be used for the purpose of making reliable quantitative comparisons, but it does show in a rough sort of way that by 1911 the brassworkers had certainly improved their "money" wages.

The year 1913 brought further increases in the rates for polishers, dressers and finishers, the extent of which has been shown in Chapter 6. In view of the fact that there is no information regarding the number of workers in each grade, it is not possible to state the average percentage advance in minimum time-rates. The table given in Chapter 6 shows that the advances ranged from 2 per cent. to 6 per cent. An unweighted average similar to that for the 1911 rates gives an average time-rate of 36/8.

This was the situation on the outbreak of war in 1914, and it is perhaps convenient to pause and cast a glance

back over the fifty years covered in this survey. The nature of the material available precludes the possibility of making reliable quantitative comparisons, because this record has been built up from various sources, and one cannot be certain that one is comparing like with like. Neither does the record help very much to show separate trends for skilled and unskilled workers. Nevertheless, as far as "money wages" are concerned, it seems clear that in the 'fifties and 'sixties there was little, if any, change in weekly rates of wages. The early 'seventies witnessed a distinct upward movement, which was not maintained in the later years of the decade. In the 'eighties there was no appreciable change ; there may have been a slight falling off, although it is reasonable to assume that this would be reflected in the working of short time rather than in the general cutting of rates of wages. In the early 'nineties, any ground lost in the 'eighties was regained, and there was a further upward movement in the later 'nineties. In the first decade of the present century rates of wages underwent little or no change, and it was not until the immediate pre-war years that any rise was registered. In the later part of this period, the underhand also gained probably to a greater extent than was possible in former times. The trend that has been sketched indicates that wages followed movements in trade activity, but it would be ridiculous to attempt to build up index numbers to demonstrate the movements that occurred.



In Chapters 12 and 13, references have been made to the relation between wages and general prices, and in view of what has been stated there, it scarcely seems necessary to relate this present trend to the trend of general prices. There have been and still are certain index numbers purporting to depict the course of general price movements, but these referred to wholesale prices only, until the Board of Trade considered the retail prices of foodstuffs in the 'nineties. Neither of these records is a satisfactory measurement of changes in working class cost of living, because rent and several other items have been disregarded. Thus, the writer does not feel justified in rushing into elaborate mathematical calculations with the object of pointing to some statistical measure of any change in "real wages". He prefers to stand by the views expressed in Chapter 12. For the period up to 1914 it appears fairly clear<sup>(1)</sup> that in the 'fifties and 'sixties there had been an upward trend in general prices with fluctuations caused by the Crimean War in the 'fifties and the American Civil War in the 'sixties. Therefore, brassworkers found it difficult in those years to maintain their normal standards of living. The early 'seventies brought some relief, although the advance in general prices was so rapid and pronounced at that stage that the balance was probably not entirely redressed until general prices fell away again in the later 'seventies. Prices continued to fall in the 'eighties,

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(1) The long period trends of general prices are too well known to need statistical presentation in these pages.

so that, if it were not for short time, brassworkers were probably not so badly off then. When the great depression had passed, the later 'eighties witnessed a turn in the direction of general prices, and for a few years brassworkers must have found it difficult to maintain their normal standards. But wages registered improvement in the early 'nineties, whereas, prices moved backwards again and reached their lowest level about 1895 and 1896. From 1896 onwards, with the exception of a few minor set-backs, prices rose steadily until 1914. Thus, in the first ten years of the twentieth century, in spite of increases in wages in the later 'nineties, brassworkers were not in comfortable circumstances. Even in the three years preceding the war when brassworkers' wages moved upwards, it is doubtful whether they fully compensated for the price movements, since prices were also moving upwards in those years.

The writer always feels sceptical of attempts made to outline long period statistical comparisons of "real" wages, because customary standards of living or habits of spending weekly wages are subject to change. Furthermore, "cost of living" is so indefinite a phrase. It is largely determined by the size of the family, and surely it is reasonable to believe that in the long period, the average size of the family may undergo change. In conjunction with this, it should be remembered that "cost of living" depends upon the nature and constitution of the family, and upon the age at which children

generally begin employment. These are long period effects which are not always allowed for by those who relate the course of rates of wages to the course of general prices and thereby arrive at index numbers for "real" wages, the results of which may not coincide with actual working-class experience. Yet another factor which is often forgotten is that at times when commodity prices are falling there is usually a fair amount of short-time being worked, and weekly earnings fall short of the normal weekly rate of wages. Thus, the workers in many trades may be no "better off" because general prices are declining and rates of wages are remaining stationary or falling at a slower rate.

The same reasoning applies to the war-time movements in the rates of wages and in cost of living, for although prices may have been rising more rapidly than rates of wages, general recourse to overtime during the war yielded earnings in excess of the weekly time-rates of wages. Even if it be accepted that the Ministry of Labour cost of living index number is an adequate measure, no index number for "real" wages can take due account of the fluctuations in actual weekly earnings. A comparison of the Ministry of Labour index number and the time-rates of graded brassworkers, as these moved during the war and afterwards may be made, and certain tendencies are revealed in it, as is shown in the following table. The table gives the cost of living index number for each month from January 1915 to the end of 1924. At each



	Cost of Living Percentage Increase Over 1914	Percentage Increase Over 1914 Time-Rates						Cost of Living Percentage Increase Over 1914	Percentage Increase Over 1914 Time-Rates				
		Grade C	Grade D (1)	Grade D (2)	Grade E (1)	Grade E (2)			Grade C	Grade D (1)	Grade D (2)	Grade E (1)	Grade E (2)
1915. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	10-15 15 15-20 15-20 20 25 25 25 25 30 30-35 35	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	1920. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	125 130 130 132 141 150 152 155 161 164 176 169	144.4	139.3	135.3	129.3	123.6
1916. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	35 35 35-40 35-40 40-45 45 45-50 45-50 50 50-55 60 65	19.6	15.7	15.3	14.9	14.8	1921. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	165 151 141 135 128 119 119 122 120 110 103 99	146.8 140.5 127.9	141.1 135.5 124.3	134.1 128.8 118.2	130.8 125.8 115.8	125 120.2 110.6
1917. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	65 65-70 70 70-75 75 75-80 80 80 80-85 75-80 85 85	38.7	34.3	32.4	30.8	29.3	1922. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	92 88 86 82 81 80 84 81 79 78 80 80	104.4 98.1 91.8	101.0 95.4 89.8	95.6 90.3 85.0	93.3 88.3 83.3	88.7 83.9 79.1
1918. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	85-90 90 90 90-95 95-100 100 100-105 110 110 115-120 120-125 120	97.8	88.1	84.0	80.4	77.3	1923. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	78 77 76 74 70 69 69 71 73 75 75 77					
1919. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	120 120 115 110 105 105 105-110 115 115 120 125 125	128.2	123.3	117.3	115.0	109.9	1924. Jan. Feb. Mar. Apr. May. June July Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.	77 79 78 73 71 69 70 71 72 76 80 81	79.7	78.7	74.4	73.2	69.6

month in which a change occurred in weekly time-rates of wages, the figures for the percentage increase over 1914 rates (after such change) has been given for five grades of dressers, finishers and polishers. The lowest grades, A and B, have not been included, since the lower grades of workers were up-graded during this period, and the A and B grades were discontinued altogether from 1919.

The table shows quite plainly what has been mentioned several times in the main text that the lower grade workmen received proportionately greater increases than the higher grade men. It also shows that, on the whole, time-rates of wages lagged behind the cost of living until April 1919, although the discrepancy was greatest for the highly skilled men. The cost of living continued to increase throughout 1919 and 1920, and the wage advances of 1920 brought rates of wages into line with general prices. The index number reached its peak in November 1920, although there was no further increase in rates of wages after May 1920. The Cable shows that throughout 1921 and the greater part of 1922, when prices were falling rapidly, rates of wages for all grades of workers were falling at about the same pace as prices in accordance with the cost of living sliding scale. At the end of this sliding scale period rates of wages were in all cases except one at a higher percentage above 1914 than were prices. But the big reduction in weekly rates of wages which took place in October 1922 reversed the situation, and the relative positions were not

altered even when prices had continued their fall in 1923. The cost of living index number began to rise again in the latter half of the year, and the increase in rates of wages which took place in May 1924 brought them into line with prices once again. The position at that date was :--

	Percentage Increase over 1914
Cost of living	71
Rates of Wages:-	
Grade C	79.7
" D(1)	78.7
" D(2)	74.4
" E(1)	73.2
" E(2)	69.6

Since May 1924 the highest figure registered by the "cost of living" index number has been 80, and from then up until the early part of 1927, 75 per cent. would be a good average for its level above 1914. For the last three years the figure has never been above 76 per cent., so that on the whole, rates of wages have stood at a higher level above the 1914 figures than have general prices. The lower grade workmen have obviously benefited more than the higher grade men.

Unless one can be certain that actual weekly earnings bear the same relation to weekly time rates as they



did in 1914, then it would be rash to conclude from the table that "real" wages are higher than in 1914. The probability is that they are higher, but the extent of the improvement cannot be stated in quantitative terms. There was another Wages Census taken in 1924, but for the present purpose the manner in which the results were presented does not prove helpful. In some respects, the 1924 enquiry into earnings and hours of labour was more satisfactory than previous enquiries. The number of workers covered in the returns was much greater than in 1906, and four weeks (in January, April, July and October) were taken as the basis of observation instead of one (in September) as in 1906. But summaries of the enquiry were never published in a separate and complete report, the results being tabulated and presented in various issues of the "Labour Gazette" in 1926.<sup>(1)</sup> Average weekly earnings are given for "All workpeople", for "Males" and for "Females", but the sexes are not further subdivided into adults and others. There is no indication of the difference in weekly earnings between those who worked full time and those who worked more or less than full time. The report does make up for the latter omission to a small extent by giving tables showing the normal number of hours of labour per week (i.e. the average of the full time hours at the different establishments

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(1) Summaries for Smelting, Casting and Rolling of Non-Ferrous Metals, for Brass Founding and Finishing, and for Metallic Bedsteads were given in the "Labour Gazette", August 1926. page 234 et seq.

from which returns were made), and the average number of hours per week actually worked in the four weeks covered by the enquiry. No distinction is made between timeworkers and pieceworkers. These defects rob the results of much of their value, and only a restricted use is possible. No separate district classifications were taken out, so it will have to be again assumed that the results are representative of Birmingham conditions.

For Brass Founding and Brass Finishing the results were as follows :

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS.

	Number of workpeople covered by the Returns	Week ending Jan.19	Apr.12.	July 12.	Oct.18.	Average for the Four weeks
		s.d.	s.d.	s.d.	s.d.	s.d.
All workpeople	27622	42/4	44/7	44/8	44/8	44/1
Males	16792 <sup>x</sup>	49/1	50/11	51/2	51/1	50/7
Females	4041 <sup>x</sup>	24/3	24/10	24/7	26/4	25/-

<sup>x</sup>The separate figures for males and females do not sum up to the figure given for all workpeople, because the returns did not always distinguish between males and females.

It is to be doubted whether female workers were adequately represented in the enquiry, because another table gave the proportions of males and females as 80.6 per cent. males to 19.4 per cent. females, which figures do not correspond with the figures given in Chapter 7 part (vi)

It must not be deduced from the above record that there is any particular seasonal swing in earnings, because general

wage advances took place in April 1924 and came into effect from the first pay day in May. Even so, the table does show that the statistician cannot afford to ignore the factor of short-time, and that a wages census based on observation of one week only is inadequate. For instance, it is well known that trade conditions began to improve in 1924, and this is shown in the figures of weekly earnings. The average weekly earnings for all workpeople in the week ending April 12th were 2/3d in excess of those for the week in January. The tables giving particulars of the hours of labour show that whereas the normal number of weekly hours averaged 47.1, the average number of hours actually worked were 46 in January and 46.5 in April.

One would naturally wish to compare the results of the 1924 wages enquiry with those of 1906, but this is rendered difficult by the omission to distinguish between adults and others in the 1924 tables. The best that can be done is to combine the figures for adult males and lads and boys and for adult females and girls as given in the 1906 reports. As the 1924 averages refer to all workpeople, whether they worked full time or not, the combined averages for 1906 will need to be calculated from the earnings of all workpeople inclusive of those who worked more or less than full time. The results are given below :-



## AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS. BRASS TRADES

	No. of workpeople covered by Returns 1906	1906	1924
Men	4220	s.d. 30/10	s.d. -
Lads & boys	1704	10/2	-
All Males	5924	24/10	50/7
Women	1561	11/7	-
Girls	627	6/10	-
All Females	2188	10/3	25/-

There is insufficient evidence to really justify a comparison between 24/10 and 50/7, which represents an increase of about 105 per cent. over the year 1906. A crude comparison for adult males can be attempted, but one ought not to place much reliance on it. It will be recalled that the arithmetic average weekly earnings for adult males who worked full time in 1906 was approximately 32/-, but that for time workers only, this figure was approximately 30/-. If an unweighted average of seven of the present trade union time rates<sup>(1)</sup> be taken, the resulting figure is approximately 63/- which represents an increase over the figure of 30/- assumed for 1906 of about 110 per cent. It will be noted from the last table that the female's weekly earnings was approximately

(1)

The rates for "fine" casters and principal tub hands in the casting shop being excluded on the grounds that such workers are mostly pieceworkers.

50 per cent. of the male's in 1924, whereas in 1906 it was only about 40 per cent.

With all our lists of figures, it is still impossible to arrive at any very definite statistical conclusions. This is only to be expected with a subject such as wages, since wages are capable of being expressed in so many different forms, and in consequence, comparisons become out of the question. Often a particular method of presentation should be adopted to suit a particular aspect of the subject. For example, hourly rates of wages are of more significance for some purposes, yet the housewife is most concerned with the weekly rate. Often, statistics are incapable of expressing the extent to which any worker or class of worker is "better off". One has to be sceptical of the utility of an average where wages are concerned. The writer feels that objection may be raised to the use of the word "approximately" in a statistical chapter. Yet, reflection may justify its intrusion. An average is intended to be a typical figure which serves as a summary of measurement for any group of some particular phenomenon. It seems just as reasonable to say that the typical wage at a particular date was approximately 32/- as to say that the arithmetic mean was 31/9. All that can be hoped is that the reader has gained some general impressions from this chapter on the trend of wages in the Birmingham brass trades. If he cares to consult the sources or to take these figures further in order to attempt a measurement of how much "better off" the brassworker

is now compared with some previous date, he may do so.

The writer is only too conscious of the errors which may arise in such a process.



APPENDIX. B. 1.REVISED LIST OF PRICES OF THE  
OPERATIVE COCK-FINISHERS.1878.NIGHT COCKS - Pot Metal.

Under Half-Inch, Rivet Bottom and Open.

				Per. Doz.	
				s.	d.
All Brandy Night Cocks	...	...	...	3	0
Small and Middle Wine	...	...	...	3	3
Large Wine	...	...	...	3	5
Small and Middle Beer	...	...	...	4	0
Large Beer	...	...	...	4	3
Hogshead	...	...	...	4	4
Small and Middle Butt	...	...	...	4	6
Large Butt	...	...	...	5	0
Brandy Bottling	...	...	...	3	6
Wine Bottling	...	...	...	3	9
Large Wine Bottling	...	...	...	3	11
Small and Middle Beer Bottling	...	...	...	4	6
Large Beer Bottling	...	...	...	4	9
All Wine and Beer Bottling					
Pipes, under and not					
more than 2-in.	...	...	...	0	6
Ditto, not more than 3-in.	...	...	...	0	9
Ditto, more than 3-in. to 4-in.	...	...	...	1	0
Butt Bottling Pipes, not more					
than 2½-in.	...	...	...	0	9
All Bottling Pipes above 2½-in.	...	...	...	1	0

TIMMINS' COCKS.

Small and Middle Wine	...	...	...	5	2
Large Wine	...	...	...	5	5
Small and Middle Beer	...	...	...	5	11
Large Beer	...	...	...	6	2
Small and Middle Butt	...	...	...	7	0
Large Butt	...	...	...	7	6

YELLOW BRASS.

Brandy Ball, not Nighted,					
Draw-file Shanks	...	...	...	5	0
Wine Ball, Ditto	...	...	...	5	2
Small Beer, Nighted	...	...	...	6	0
Large "	...	...	...	6	9
Small and Middle Butt	...	...	...	7	3
Large Butt	...	...	...	7	9

YELLOW BRASS (continued)

				s.	d.
Register Cocks	...	...	...	7	6
Register Vents	...	...	...	8	6
No 1 Cocks	...	...	...	9	6
Ditto, with Mixed Keys	...	...	...	10	0

LOCK COCKS.

Under 1/2 inch.

All Brandy Lock Cocks	...	...	...	5	10
Small and Middle Wine	...	...	...	4	3
Large Wine	...	...	...	4	3
Small and Middle Beer	...	...	...	5	0
Large Beer	...	...	...	5	3
Hogshead	...	...	...	5	4
Small and Middle Butt	...	...	...	5	6
Large Butt	...	...	...	6	0

NIGHT COCKS.

1/2-inch Racking, Rivet Bottom	...	...	...	5	0
and Open	...	...	...		
3/4- " Racking, Rivet Bottom	...	...	...	6	3
and Open	...	...	...		
1/2- " Ditto	...	...	...	7	3
3/4- " Ditto	...	...	...	8	3
1-inch Ditto	...	...	...	10	0

Racking, 1 1/2-in. 14s. ; 1 1/4-in., 18s.; 1 1/2-in., 26s. per doz.

1/2-inch Bibb and Stop	...	...	...	4	6
3/4- " " " "	...	...	...	6	0
1- " " " "	...	...	...	7	0
1 1/4- " " " "	...	...	...	8	6
1 1/2- " " " "	...	...	...	9	6
1 3/4- " " " "	...	...	...	13	6
2- " " " "	...	...	...	16	0
2 1/2- " " " "	...	...	...	23	0

1/2-inch Washers and Wastes	...	...	...	4	0
3/4- " " " "	...	...	...	4	9
1- " " " "	...	...	...	5	0
1 1/4- " " " "	...	...	...	6	6
1 1/2- " " " "	...	...	...	7	0
1 3/4- " " " "	...	...	...	8	6
2- " " " "	...	...	...	10	0
2 1/2- " " " "	...	...	...	13	0
3- " " " "	...	...	...	17	0
3 1/2- " " " "	...	...	...	20	0
4- " " " "	...	...	...	30	0

1/2-inch Valves	...	...	...	...
3/4- " " " "	...	...	...	...

						s.	d.
1	1/2	inch Valves	...	...	...		
1	1/2	"	...	...	...	8	0
1	1/2	"	...	...	...	9	0
1	1/2	"	...	...	...	10	0
1	1/2	"	...	...	...	12	0
2	1/2	"	...	...	...	15	0
2	1/2	"	...	...	...	18	0
3	1/2	"	...	...	...	22	0
4	1/2	"	...	...	...	36	0

LOCK COCKS.

1/2-inch Racking, Rivet Bottom							
and Open							
1	"	Ditto	...	...	6	6	
1	"	Ditto	...	...	7	6	
1	"	Ditto	...	...	9	3	
1	"	Ditto	...	...	10	6	
1	"	Ditto	...	...	11	9	

EXTRA PRICES.

					Per. Doz.	
All Boiled White Cocks Returned to the						
Men, 3d. per dozen extra.					s.	d.
All Turned Barrel Cocks, to 2-in. ...					1	0
Washer Bottom Cocks, from Brandy to						
Butt ...					0	6
Ditto from 1/2-in. to 1-in. ...					1	0
Fitting Water Balls, from 1/2-in. to						
1-in. ...					0	6
Ditto, from 1-in. to 1 1/2-in. ...					1	0
Yellow Brass, White or Gun Metal,						
from Brandy to Butt ...					1	0
Ditto 1/2-in. ...					1	3
Ditto 1/2-in. and 1-in. ...					1	6
Ditto 1/2-in and 1-in....					1	9
Ditto all above ...					2	0
Poundage Work, Yellow Brass or						
Fine Met al ...					3d.	per lb.
Milk Washers, 1s. per dozen more than Washers						
and Wastes,						
Grating, from Brandy to Butt ...					0	3
Ditto, 1/2-in. to 1-in. ...					0	6
Putting together Plated Cocks ...					0	6
Nighting, from Beer to Butt ...					0	3
Ditto, 1/2-in. to 1-in. ...					0	6
All Quarter-Nighted ...					0	6
Ditto Turned Ends to Butt ...					0	3
Ditto, from 1/2-in. to 1-in....					0	6
Work per the lb. ...					0	2 1/2



PATENT COCKS.

					s.	d.
No. 600	Cocks,	Screwed Heads	...	...	7	10
No. 600	"	Common	...	...	6	10
No. 500	"	Screwed Heads	...	...	6	10
No. 500	"	Common	...	....	5	3

No Discount or Deduction of any kind whatever to be allowed off the foregoing prices.

APPENDIX. B. 2.HINGE DRESSING. PRICE LIST.To Come into Operation on Saturday, July 1, 1876.LIGHT BUTT HINGES. SANDED. - Narrow Width.

Length of Joint	...	1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
Breadth when open	..	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{9}{16}$	$\frac{5}{8}$	$\frac{11}{16}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{7}{8}$	1	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$
		6d.	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	7d.	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	8d.	9d.	10d.	1/-	1/2 per doz. pairs.

LIGHT BUTT HINGES. SANDED. - Medium Width.

Length of Joint	...	1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
Breadth when open	..	$\frac{5}{8}$	$\frac{4}{16}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{7}{8}$	1	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$
		6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	7d.	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	8d.	9d.	10d.	11d.	1/1.	1/3 per doz. pairs.

LIGHT BUTT HINGES. SANDED. - Broad Width.

Length of Joint	...	1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
Breadth when open	..	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{7}{8}$	1	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{5}{8}$	$1\frac{7}{8}$
		7d.	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	8d.	9d.	10d.	11d.	1/-	1/2.	1/4 per doz. pairs.

STRONG SANDED BUTT HINGES. - Narrow Width.

Length of Joint		$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
Breadth when open		$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{13}{16}$	$\frac{15}{16}$	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{5}{8}$
		7d.	8d.	9d.	10d.	11d.	1/-	1/2	1/4 per doz. pairs.

STRONG SANDED BUTT HINGES. - Medium Width.

Length of Joint		1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
Breadth when open		$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{7}{8}$	1	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{5}{8}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$
		7d.	8d.	9d.	10d.	11d.	1/-	1/1	1/3	1/5 per doz. pairs.

STRONG SANDED BUTT HINGES. - Broad width.

Length of Joint		1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
Breadth when open		$\frac{7}{8}$	1	$1\frac{3}{16}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{5}{8}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$
		7d.	8d.	9d.	10d.	1/-	1/1	1/3	1/5	1/7 per doz. pairs.

LIGHT DESK HINGES. SANDED.

Length of Joint		1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
Breadth when open		$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$2\frac{1}{8}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	$3\frac{1}{8}$	$3\frac{7}{16}$	$3\frac{13}{16}$		
		7d.	8d.	10d.	1/1	1/5	1/9	2/3	2/9	3/3 per doz. pairs.

STRONG DESK HINGES, SANDED.

Length of Joint	1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Breadth when open	$1\frac{5}{8}$	$2\frac{1}{8}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{8}$	$3\frac{1}{4}$	$4\frac{1}{8}$	
	8d.	9d.	11d.	$1\frac{1}{3}$	$1\frac{1}{7}$	2/-	$2\frac{2}{6}$ per doz. pairs.

BACK FLAP HINGES, SANDED.

Length of Joint	1	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
Breadth when open	$2\frac{1}{16}$	$2\frac{1}{8}$	$3\frac{5}{16}$	$3\frac{3}{4}$	$4\frac{1}{4}$	$4\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{5}{16}$
	10d.	1/-	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{6}$	2/-	$2\frac{2}{8}$	$3\frac{1}{6}$ per doz. pairs.

Employers and Workmen to concede  $\frac{1}{16}$  of an inch in the above breadths, in order to regulate the intermediate measurements.

LIGHT SANDED WARDROBE HINGES.

$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
10d.	1/-	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{6}$	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{10}$ per doz. pairs.

STRONG WARDROBE HINGES.

$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3 inches.
1/-	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{6}$	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{10}$	2/- per doz. pairs.

COMMON BUTTON HINGES, SHADED.

1	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{5}{8}$	$1\frac{3}{4}$	$1\frac{7}{8}$	2 inches.
1/-	$1\frac{1}{1}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{3}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{5}$	$1\frac{1}{6}$	$1\frac{1}{7}$	$1\frac{1}{8}$ per single dozen.

LIGHT H. HINGES.

2	$2\frac{1}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{3}{4}$	3	$3\frac{1}{4}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$3\frac{3}{4}$	4	$4\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
1/-	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{3}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{5}$	$1\frac{1}{7}$	$1\frac{1}{9}$	$1\frac{1}{11}$	$2\frac{1}{1}$	$2\frac{2}{3}$ per doz. pairs.
5	$5\frac{1}{2}$	6 inches.							
$2\frac{2}{6}$	$2\frac{2}{10}$	$3\frac{2}{3}$							

CLOCK CASE HINGES.

$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
$1\frac{1}{6}$	$1\frac{1}{7}$	$1\frac{1}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{9}$ per doz. pairs.

SPRING TRAY HINGES.

$1\frac{1}{4}$	$1\frac{3}{8}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{5}{8}$ inches.
3/-	$3\frac{2}{3}$	$3\frac{2}{6}$	$3\frac{2}{9}$ per doz. pairs.



STRAIGHT CARD TABLE HINGES.

$\frac{1\frac{3}{4}}{1/6}$   $\frac{2}{1/8}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{4}}{1/10}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{2}}{2/-}$   $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/3}$  3 inches.  
 $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/6}$  per doz. pairs.

CROSS-JOINTED CARD TABLE HINGES.

$\frac{2}{2/-}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{4}}{2/2}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{2}}{2/4}$   $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/7}$  3 inches.  
 $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/10}$  per doz. pairs.

H. CARD TABLE HINGES.

$\frac{2}{2/-}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{4}}{2/2}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{2}}{2/4}$   $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/7}$  3 inches.  
 $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/10}$  per doz. pairs.

STRAP HINGES.

$\frac{1\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{5}{16}}{10d.}$  /  $\frac{1\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{3}{8}}{11d.}$  /  $\frac{1\frac{3}{8} \times \frac{7}{16}}{1/-}$  /  $\frac{1\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{2}}{1/1}$  /  $\frac{1\frac{5}{8} \times \frac{9}{16}}{1/2}$  inches.  
 per doz. pairs.  
 $\frac{1\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{5}{8}}{1/3}$  /  $\frac{1\frac{7}{8} \times \frac{5}{8}}{1/5}$  /  $\frac{2 \times \frac{5}{8}}{1/7}$  /  $\frac{2\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{5}{8}}{1/9}$  /  $\frac{2\frac{3}{8} \times \frac{5}{8}}{1/11}$  inches.  
 per doz. pairs.  
 $\frac{2\frac{5}{8} \times \frac{5}{8}}{2/1}$  /  $\frac{2\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{5}{8}}{2/3}$  inches.  
 per doz. pairs.

Measurement: From centre of pin to end of hinge, when closed.

T. HINGES.

$\frac{1\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{3}{4}}{1/-}$   $\frac{1\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{7}{8}}{1/1}$   $\frac{1\frac{1}{4} \times 1}{1/2}$   $\frac{1\frac{3}{8} \times 1}{1/3}$  inches.  
 per doz. pairs.  
 $\frac{1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{8}}{1/4}$  /  $\frac{1\frac{5}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{4}}{1/5}$  inches.  
 per doz. pairs.  
 $\frac{1\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}}{1/6}$  /  $\frac{2 \times 1\frac{3}{8}}{1/8}$  /  $\frac{2\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}}{1/10}$  /  $\frac{2\frac{3}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{4}}{2/-}$  inches.  
 $\frac{2\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{4}}{2/2}$  /  $\frac{2\frac{5}{8} \times 1\frac{1}{4}}{2/4}$  inches.  
 per doz. pairs.

Measurement: From centre of pin to end of hinge, when closed.

NARROW PROJECTING BUTT HINGES. - Selvedged & Polished Backs.

$\frac{2}{1/6}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{4}}{1/9}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{2}}{2/-}$   $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/4}$  3 inches.  
 $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{2/8}$  per doz. pairs.

BROAD PROJECTING BUTT HINGES. - Selvedged & Polished Backs.

$\frac{2}{2/6}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{4}}{2/9}$   $\frac{2\frac{1}{2}}{3/3}$   $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{3/9}$  3 inches.  
 $\frac{2\frac{3}{4}}{4/3}$  per doz. pairs.

BUTT HINGES. - Polished Backs.

- 2d. per dozen pairs extra, from 1 inch to 2 inches inclusive.  
 3d. " " " " " 2 inches to 3 inches inclusive.
- 

POLISHED BUTTS.

One-half more than if sanded.

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Light Narrow Butts, "Loose"  
 " Medium " "  
 " Broad " "

- 2d. per dozen pairs extra over List Price, from 1 inch to  
 2 inches inclusive.  
 3d. per dozen pairs, from 2 inches to 3 inches inclusive.
- 

Strong Butts, Loose, from 1 inch to 3 inches, Same as Light.

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Any kind of Desk or Back Flap Hinge reversed, 3d. per dozen  
 extra.

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There are some sorts of hinges which the workmen contend require an advance equally with those in the List, but it was found difficult to compare and classify them, and it is therefore recommended that all such cases may be rectified in a fair and just manner between individual employers and their workmen.

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These prices are exclusive of the 15 per cent advance, which is at the present time paid.

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APPENDIX. B.3.PROPOSED LIST OF PRICES FOR CASTINGS, 1882.CASTING OF CHANDELIER, COMMON, GAS & GENERAL COCK WORK.

Common Fine	...	22/-	per cwt.	
Best Common	...	15/-	" "	including Pulley Frames, Ball Joints, Back Plates, and Glass Holders when not done fine.
Common Gas Work		10/-	" "	
Cock Work	...	10/-	" "	Odd Moulds, 4d. each and weight.
Pin Pattern Work		4d.	per lb.	
False Cored	...	1/-	" "	
Odd Moulds	...	4d.	each.	
Running Down Dust		2/6	per cwt.	to be paid on the weight taken out.
Mixing Metal	...	1/-		

The 10 per cent Bonus to be paid on these Prices and added the same way as at present.

CASTING OF GENERAL CABINET WORK.

Common Fine Work	21/-	per cwt.		all wrought patterns included
Sash Pulley Wheels	12/-	" "		over 1 inch, under 1 inch to be counted, and 2/6 per gross paid extra.
Tack Work	...	10/-	" "	Screws and Spikes included.
Common Castings	..	9/-	" "	
Shoes and Plates	.	12/-	" "	
Jobbing Work	...	10/-	" "	all under 3 dozen to be weighed as jobbing work.
Ventilators	...	10/-	" "	
Running Down Dust		2/6	" "	to be paid on the weight taken out.
Mixing Metal	...	1/-	" "	

The 10 per cent Bonus to be paid on these Prices and added the same way as at present.



APPENDIX. 6.4.MASTER BRASSWORKERS' ASSOCIATION.CASTERS' PRICE LIST, 1883.

At a Special General Meeting of the Association, held at 37, Bennett's Hill, on Tuesday, the 19th December, 1882,

J. T. COLLINS, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR,

the following Resolution was passed.

Resolved -

That a minimum of 8/- per cwt. for Common Castings be recommended, to date from 1st January next, and should Trade improve in the early part of next year, the Association will be prepared to take the question of a general advance of Bonus to 15% into favourable consideration; the Rates for other Castings to be as agreed upon between the Committee and the Deputation.

Note: The Casting prices recommended under the above resolution are as follows:

COMMON PINE WORK	20/- per cwt.,	Single and Double, all wrought patterns included.
SASH PULLEY WHEELS	11/-	" Over 1 inch (under 1 inch to be counted, and 2/- per gross paid extra) or per heat of good work.
TACK WORK ... ..	9/-	" Screws and Spikes included.
COMMON CASTINGS ..	8/-	"
SHOES AND PLATES .	10/-	" Dried Moulds.
JOBGING WORK ...	9/-	" All under 2 dozen to be weighed as jobging work.
VENTILATORS ...	9/-	"
RUNNING DOWN DUST	2/6	" To be paid on the weight of Metal brought in.
MIXING METAL ...	1/-	" To be paid on the weight of Metal brought in.

APPENDIX. B. 5.BIRMINGHAM BRASS CASTING TRADE.GENERAL PRICE LIST. 1899.

At Special Conferences of Employers and Workmen,  
held at the Cobden Hotel, Birmingham, on March 1st and 15th,  
1890, the following Price List was agreed to:

Fine Work double faced	...	...	...	...	21/-	per cwt.
" " single	...	...	...	...	18/-	" "
Dried Work	...	...	...	...	14/-	" "
German Silver	...	...	...	...	12/-	" "
Fender Work	...	...	...	...	12/-	" "
Steam Gauges	...	...	...	...	11/-	" "
Tack Work	...	...	...	...	10/6	" "
Gas, Cook, and Fire Brasswork	...	...	...	...	10/-	" "
Bedstead Work	...	...	...	...	10/-	" "
Odd side Gun Metal	...	...	...	...	8/6	" "
General odd side and Cabinet Work	...	...	...	...	8/6	" "
Perambulator Caps	...	...	...	...	6/6	" "
Flanges (Bicycle and Tricycle)	...	...	...	...	6/9	" "
Harness Furniture Work	...	...	...	...	6/6	" "
Umbrella Work	...	...	...	...	6/6	" "
Mill and Forge Brasses	...	...	...	...	5/6	" "
Weights	...	...	...	...	4/6	" "

The Bonus of 15 per cent to be added to the above prices without exception.

INCIDENTAL CHARGES AND REGULATIONS.

That for clear metal an allowance not exceeding 7lbs.  
per cwt. be made.

That a fine of 6d. each be imposed for the wilful neglect  
of fire and pots.

That a charge of 1/- per tub be made for gas when used.

That 3d. per cwt. be paid for shaking by motive power.

PRICE LIST FOR CASTING.1897.Chandelier and Lamp Trade.

Fine Work ...	...	...	21/- per cwt.
German Silver ...	...	...	3d. and 4d. per lb.
Light Scroll Work ...	...	...	25/- per cwt.
Green Work ...	...	...	14/- per cwt.

If the odd side in green work is not 4lb. in weight, to be paid as 4lb.

Pin Work, Ordinary, ...	...	4d. per lb.
False-Cored Work ...	...	from 1/- per lb.
Pulley-Bowls, in fine ...	...	8d. per doz.
Waxes ...	...	4d. per mould.
under six inches; over 6 inches to be paid extra.		

Lead and Tin Patterns (small)	3d. each.
Large extra, according to size.	
Reverses (small)	1/3 each.
Large extra, according to size.	

Moulds (large) extra to ordinary size.

Odd Moulds, 3d. each and weight, when under 3lb. to the dozen. Pin Work and False-Cored Work included in Odd Moulds.

The 20 per cent. bonus to be paid on all the above prices.

Common Gas Work.

Common Gas Work ...	...	9/- per cwt.
Mixed Sides ...	...	11/- per cwt.
Rings, all under 6 inches, ...	...	1d. each and weight.
Over six inches to be paid according to size.		
German (common side) ...	...	2d. per lb.
Odd Moulds ...	...	3d. each and weight.
All under 2 dozen to constitute Odd Moulds.		

All Wrought Work put in common side to be sorted and weighed at 14/- per cwt., and to be known as Green Work.



Running-down Dust ... ..	2/6 per cwt.
On work taken in.	
Mixing Metal ... ..	1/- " "

The bonus of 20 per cent. to be added to the above prices in all cases.

Casters to change all legitimate waste rejected by the rough warehouseman.

No turned or screwed work to be returned to the casters, but work hedged only to be considered legitimate casters' waste.

No payment to be made for barreling work, rolling sand, or gas.

#### Day Work.

In fine or common:-

First Workman ...	36/- per week and the bonus of 20 per cent.
Second " ...	32/- " " " " " " " "

Overtime to be paid at the rate of time and a quarter, both for day work and piece work.

#### Cock and Plumbers' Work.

Cock work and plumbers' work, 10/- per cwt., including keys; screws and strips, 10/6 per cwt.

Cock Work, White Metal ... ..	14/- per cwt.
" " Special White Metal,	18/- " "
" " Gun Metal ... ..	10/- " "
Mill and Forge Brasses ... ..	5/6 " "

Day-work, overtime, casters' waste, and general conditions, same as other list.

Cabinet Castings.

Fine Work	...	...	...	...	21/-	per cwt.
Pin Pattern Work	...	...	...	...	4d.	per lb.
False Cored Work, from	...	...	...	...	1/-	per lb.
Green Work	...	...	...	...	14/-	per cwt.
Common	...	...	...	...	9/-	per cwt.
Mixed Odd Side Work	...	...	...	...	10/-	" "
Tack Work	...	...	...	...	11/-	" "
Ventilators	...	...	...	...	11/-	" "
Shoes and Plates	...	...	...	...	12/-	" "
Pulley Bowls	..	...	...	...	12/-	" "
Fender Work	...	...	...	...	12/-	" "
Bedstead Work	..	...	...	...	11/-	" "
Railway Carriage Work	...	...	...	...	8/-	" "
Manilla Work (Money)	...	...	...	...	5/6	" "

Odd Moulds to be paid the same as Common Gas List.

The 20 per cent. bonus to be paid on the above prices.

Day-work, overtime, casters' waste, and general conditions, same as other list.

Odd sides, when taken in, not to be kept longer than half-an-hour.

APPENDIX. B. 7.CASTERS' PRICE LIST.1911.Cook, Steam, and Plumbers' Work.

Cook Work and Plumbers' Work (including					
	Gun Metal)	...	...	...	9/8 per cwt.
Strips (if a whole side)		...	...	...	11/- " "
Pot Metal	...	...	...	...	11/- " "
Cook Work, White Metal		...	...	...	14/- " "
Cook Work, Special White Metal		...	...	...	15/- " "
If dried	...	...	...	...	18/- " "
Mill and Forge Brasses		...	...	...	5/6 " " if a
					full mould.
Odd Moulds, 3d. per mould, and weight on patterns for less than twelve.					

Allowance of 7 lbs. per cwt. Where this loss is exceeded it should be the subject of enquiry.

The 20 per cent. bonus to be paid on the above prices.

Odd sides, when taken in, not to be kept longer than half-an-hour.

Day Work.

First Workman	...	...	36/- and the bonus.
Second Workman	..	...	32/- " " "
Overtime - Day-workers,	...		Time and a quarter.
Overtime - Pieceworkers,	...		Price and a quarter.

No tooled work to be taken to as waste.

Edging# and bodies excepted.

No deduction of any kind to be charged.



Cabinet Castings.

Fine Work ... ..	22/- per cwt.
Pin Pattern Work, . . . . .	4d. per lb.
False Cored Work, from .. . . .	1/- " "
Green Work, . . . . .	14/- per cwt.
Common ... ..	9/2 " "
Side, with mixed patterns of other branches,	11/6 " "
Tack Work,... . . . .	11/6 " "
Ventilators . . . . .	11/6 " "
Jobbing Work . . . . .	11/6 " "
Shoes and Plates ... . .	11/6 " "
Pulley Bows . . . . .	11/6 " "
Perambulator Work, . . . . .	12/- " "
Fender Work . . . . .	12/- " "
Fender Scrolls ... . .	15/- " "
Bedstead Work . . . . .	11/6 " "
Odd Moulds, up to 24 moulds ... . .	11/6 " "
Separate Odd Moulds.....	3d. each, and weight.
Railway Carriage Work, whole side	8/- per cwt.
Manilla Work (Money) .....	5/6 " "
Aluminium, Heavy .....	3d. per lb.
Aluminium, Light .....	4d. " "

Allowance of 7 lbs. per cwt. common; 9 lbs. per cwt. fine. Where this loss is exceeded it should be the subject of enquiry.

The 20 per cent. bonus to be paid on the above prices.

Odd sides, when taken in, not to be kept longer than half-an-hour.

Rings, 6 in. by 4 in. and over, extra and weight, by agreement.

Plate Stands, extra according to size, by agreement.

Day Workers.

Fine Work and False Cored Work,	44/- per week and bonus.
Moulder ... . . . .	30/- " " " "

Common Work -

Principal hand ... . .	38/- " " " "
Moulder ... . . . .	30/- " " " "

No deductions of any kind to be charged.

Overtime as in other list.

Chandelier, Common Gas and Electric Work.

Fine Work (all over 3 lbs., all general work )	22/-	per cwt.
Fine Work (all odd sides weighing under 3 lbs. and over 2½ lbs.) ... ..	27/-	" "
Fine Work (all odd sides weighing under 2½ lbs. and over 2 lbs.) .. ...	32/-	" "
Fine Work (all odd sides weighing under 2 lbs.) ... ..	42/-	" "

If ordered under a dozen, 3d. extra each mould in addition.

False Cored Work (ordinary) ..... from 1/- per lb.

Special Cored Work to be paid extra according to agreement.

Waxes, 4d. each and weight. Plaster Patterns - by agreement.

Lead Moulds, 4d. each, and weight.

Pin Work, 4d. per lb.

Common Work ... ..	9/8	per cwt.
Dried Work, ... ..	15/-	" "

All Patterns taking extra size moulds to be paid an extra rate by agreement, or done day-work.

All Rings above 6in. to be paid in addition to weight - 7 inches, 1d. each; 9 inches, 1½d. each; 12 inches, 2d. each.

All work under a dozen to be paid as odd moulds, 3d. each, mould and weight.

Allowance for Fine Work, 9 lbs. per cwt.

Where this loss is exceeded it should be the subject of enquiry.

Mixing Metal, 1/- per cwt. extra.

Running down Dust, 2/6 per cwt. on metal weighed in.

Day Workers.

Common Work -

Principal Tub-hand (first man) .....	38/-	and bonus.
Moulder .....	30/-	" "
Getter down ... ..	25/-	" "

## Fine Work -

All Fine and False Cored Men .....	44/-	and bonus.
Moulder ... ..	30/-	" "

## Reverses -

Small, 1/4; Large, 2/8, and weight.

The bonus to be added in all cases.

No deductions of any kind.

No work partly dressed to be taken to as waste.

Edging, sand blasting and boring not to be considered work as partly dressed.

Overtime as in other list.



APPENDIX. B. 8.CASTERS' PRICE LISTas in operation at present.Daywork Casters.

Principal hand ...	...	54/-	per week of 47 hours.
Moulder ...	...	42/-	" " " " "
Getter-down ...	...	35/-	" " " " "

Present wages, with bonus added, are: Principal hand, £3. 15. 6<sup>3</sup>d.; Moulder, £3. 3. 6<sup>3</sup>d.; and Getter-down, £2. 16. 6<sup>3</sup>d. per week.

Plumbers, Gas, Steam, etc. Work.

Weight per mould from 6 to 7 lbs.	...	17/-	per cwt.
" " " over 7 to 8 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> lbs.	...	15/9	" "
" " " " 8 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> to 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> lbs.	...	14/-	" "
" " " " 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> to 10 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> lbs.	...	13/6	" "
" " " " 10 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> to 12 lbs.	...	12/6	" "
" " " " 12 to 15 lbs.	by arrangement.		

Stripes (if a whole side) 19/- per cwt.

Pot Metal, An extra of 2/- per cwt. above Brass rates.

Cook Work - White Metal.

6 to 7 lbs.	...	19/-	cwt.
Over 7 to 8 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> lbs.	...	17/9	"

This is to apply where there is a continuous output of not less than 72 moulds and not more than one change over from one metal to another takes place during any one week.

For lesser quantities or any other method of working, 20/- per cwt.; if dried, 23/6 per cwt.

Members offered any other system than those in the Clause must report direct to the Secretary of the Branch. Mill and Forge Brasses, if a full Mould, 7/6 per cwt. Odd Moulds, 4d. per mould and weight for 12 and under.

Fine Casting - Cabinet, Chandelier, Electric  
Work and False Cored.

Daywork.

Principal hand ... 60/- per week of 47 hours.  
 Moulder ... 42/- " " of 47 hours.

Present wages, with bonus added are: Principal  
hand, £4. 1. 6d.; Moulder, £3. 3. 6d.

Piecework.

Weight per mould from	1½ to 2 lbs.	...	8d. per lb.
" " " over	2 to 2½ lbs.	...	54/- per cwt.
" " " " 2½ to 3	lbs.	...	45/- " "
" " " " 3 to 4	lbs.	...	38/- " "
" " " " 4 lbs. and upwards,			32/- per cwt.

Pin pattern work, 7d. per lb. or per piece by mutual agreement.

False Cored Work, Extra to fine work prices by mutual agreement.

Green Work, under 7 lbs. per Mould, 31/- per cwt.

" " over 7 to 8½ lbs. per mould, 25/- per cwt.

" " 8½ to 10 lbs. " 21/- per cwt.

Common Cabinet Castings.

From 3¼ to 4½ lbs. per mould, 22/- per cwt.

All moulds under 3¼ lbs. to be paid for as 3¼ lbs.

Over 4½ to 5½ lbs., per mould, 17/- per cwt.

Over 5½ to 7 lbs. " 14/- per cwt.

Jobbing work to be paid at schedule rate with addition of 2d. per mould for 24 and under, and 1d. per mould for 25 to 72.

Shoes and Plates, 17/- per cwt.

Pulley Bowls - except Chain Wheels, 17s. per cwt.

Odd Moulds, 4d. per mould and weight for 12 and under.

Aluminium. Three times the price at which it should be paid for if in brass.

Rings, Ventilators, etc. To be paid at scheduled cabinet rates in cases where they can be placed in ordinary moulds. If too large for such moulds or too light to come within weights arranged, rate to be fixed by mutual agreement.

Cored Arms. Extra to fine work by mutual agreement.  
 Waxen and Plasters. Prices to be arranged by mutual agreement.  
 Lead and Tin. At scheduled rate for Brass castings, plus 4d. for odd moulds.  
 Pin Work. 7d. per lb. or per piece by mutual agreement.  
 Metal Mixing. If poured into ingot from pots under 120 lbs., 1/6 per cwt. If poured into ingot from pots 120 lb. or larger, 1/3 per cwt.  
 If Scrap exceeds 25 per cent of total metals weighed out the price of mixing should be paid on the excess weight of Scrap.  
 Running-down Swarf into ingot from pots under 120 lbs., 1/9 per cwt.  
 Running-down Swarf into ingot from pots 120 lbs. or larger, 1/6d. per cwt.  
 Running-down Dust into Ingots, 3/- per cwt. on weight delivered.  
 All patterns taking extra size moulds to be paid an extra rate by agreement or done day work.  
 Where higher prices exist they shall not be reduced.  
 To these prices must be added the War advances of 21/6 day workers; 2 1/4 plus 21/6 pieceworkers.  
 All previous lists rescinded.  
 The agreement with regard to Bonus continues to operate as arranged with the Brassfounders' Employers' Association on February 17th, 1926.

#### Casters' Waste.

By agreement with the Brassfounders' Employers' Association at a joint meeting of Employers' and Casters' representatives held on the 26th November, 1925, the following was unanimously agreed upon :-

"That no tooled castings shall be taken back by the casters as waste. Edged work not to be considered tooled work.

"Cases of an abnormal amount of faulty castings can be dealt with by representatives of the two Associations if necessary, with a view of determining where the fault lies."



APPENDIX C.I.Grading Schedule of Brass and Metal Mechanics' Society as at present in operation.C. - BROWN GRADE.

To all workers 21 years of age, not qualified for D. and E. Grades.

MINIMUM WAGE, 34/- per week.

Present wage, with bonus added in accordance with following agreement.

17th February, 1926.

Memorandum of Agreement between the Brassfounders' Employers' Association and the National Brass and Metal Mechanics, as arranged by their Joint Conciliation Board.

"It is agreed that rates of wages and conditions of labour shall be stabilised for a period of twelve months from this date with the following exception: Those men who, after this date, attain the age of 21 years and who enter Grade C., shall receive the basis wage of 34/- per week plus a bonus of 15/6 until they attain the age of 21½ years, when they shall be entitled to the full bonus of 21/6½."

D. - (1) BLUE GRADE.

Twenty-one years of age, with six years' qualification in the trade.

Dressers who turn, screw inside and out or plug and seat, or file flat and square at the vice, or braze.

Dippers who are all round dippers and bronzers, or do art bronzing and colouring, or electro-plating, or have a knowledge of electro-plating and solutions.

Burnishers who are hook or straight burnishers at the vice, or satisfactorily burnish deep thin shell work at the lathe.

Chasers and Repairers who are not qualified for E. Grade.

Makers-up who have knowledge and experience of all classes of the trade or branch in which they are employed.

Stampers who undertake all classes of deep or shallow work in all strengths of the metal used.

MINIMUM WAGE, 41/- per week.

Present wage with bonus added, £3. 2. 6½d. per week.

D. - (2) GREY GRADE.

Polishers only. Those of average ability who have six years' qualifications in the trade.

MINIMUM WAGE, 43/- per week.

Present wage, with bonus added, £3. 4. 6½d. per week.

E. - (1) RED GRADE.

Dressers. Those who have a complete expert knowledge and experience of all classes of lathe or vice work, or work to blue prints or drawings.

Art Bronzers who have an expert knowledge of art bronzing or metal colouring, or electro depositing and solutions.

Pattern Makers or Pattern Chasers.

Chasers and Repairers with expert knowledge of all classes of work.

Burnishers who are experts in all classes of work.

Makers-up who are experts.

Stampers who are experts in all classes of work.

MINIMUM WAGE, 46/- per week.

Present wage, with bonus added, £3. 7. 6½d. per week.

E. - (2) MAUVE GRADE.

Polishers only. Expert in all processes.

MINIMUM WAGE, 48/- per week.

Present wage, with bonus added, £3. 9. 6½d. per week.

YOUTHS' WAGES.

			£	s	d		£	s	d
18 years of age ... ..	...	...	0.	18.	0				
Bonus ... ..	...	...	0.	11.	3½	.. Total	1.	9.	3½
19 years of age ... ..	...	...	1.	3.	0				
Bonus ... ..	...	...	0.	11.	3½	.. Total	1.	14.	3½
20 years of age ... ..	...	...	1.	8.	0				
Bonus ... ..	...	...	0.	11.	3½	.. Total	1.	19.	3½

PIECEWORK DRESSERS.

Piecework prices shall be such as to enable a workman of average ability to earn at least 25 per cent above his basis day work rate, such extra to be in addition to the total earnings on the standard day work rates, including all War Awards.

If C, D, and E graded men, or D and E graded men, are engaged in the same factory doing the same class of work as each other, the prices shall be fixed with regard to the E grade man.

APPENDIX. C. 2.Grading of skilled male workers under the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board.Braziers.

A Brazier of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on brazing and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III as hereinafter defined.

A Brazier of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as a Brazier and who is employed in brazing all classes of metal except aluminium.

A Brazier of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II, as above defined, is also employed in brazing aluminium OR is a charge hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

Burnishers.

A Burnisher of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on burnishing and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or of Grade III as hereinafter defined.

A Burnisher of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as a Burnisher and who is employed as a hook and straight Burnisher at the vice and satisfactorily burnishes deep thin shell at the lathe.

A Burnisher of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II, as above defined, is an expert in speed and quality in all classes of work OR is a charge hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

Drop-Stampers.

A Drop-Stamper of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on drop-stamping and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III as hereinafter defined.



A Drop-Stamping of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as a Drop-Stamping and who is employed on all classes of deep or shallow work.

A Drop-Stamping of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II, as above defined, is an expert in all classes of work OR is a charge hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

#### Dippers who are also Bronzers.

A Worker of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on dipping and bronzing and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III as hereinafter defined.

A Worker of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as a Dipper and Bronzer, who is employed in dipping or bronzing or on art bronzing and colouring, or electro-plating.

A Worker of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II, as above defined, also has an expert knowledge of art bronzing or metal colouring or electro depositing and solutions OR is a charge hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

#### Polishers.

A Polisher of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on polishing and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III as hereinafter defined.

A Polisher of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as Polisher and is employed in any process of any class of common work and who emery-bobs or mops.

A Polisher of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II, as above defined, is also an expert in all processes of both common and best work OR is a charge hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

For alterations in wording of original draft, see p  
of text, Chapter 8.

## A P P E N D I X C.3.

### GRADING OF SKILLED MALE WORKERS UNDER THE COFFIN FURNITURE AND CEREMENT MAKING TRADE BOARD.

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DRESSERS. - A Dresser of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on Dressing and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III next hereinafter respectively defined.

A Dresser of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as a Dresser and who turns, screws inside and out, files flat and square at the vice, and finished his own work throughout.

A Dresser of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II as above defined, is also an expert in all processes or is a Charge Hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

STAMPERS. - A Stamper of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on Stamping and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III next hereinafter respectively defined.

A Stamper of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years'

experience as a Stamper and is an expert in all processes, and who undertakes all classes of work of all strengths of metal used.

A Stamper of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II as above defined, is an expert in all classes of Stamping, Pressing and Cutting-out by hand or who is a Charge Hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

POLISHERS. - A Polisher of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on Polishing and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III next hereinafter respectively defined.

A Polisher of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as a Polisher and is an expert in all processes of any class of common work and can emery-bob and mop best work.

A Polisher of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II as above defined, is also an expert in all processes of both common and best work or is a Charge Hand responsible for all work and order in the shop.

PLANISHERS OR WHEELERS. - A Planisher or Wheeler of Grade I is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over employed on Planishing or Wheeling and not fulfilling the conditions of Grade II or Grade III next hereinafter



respectively defined.

A Planisher or Wheeler of Grade II is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who has had not less than six years' experience as a Planisher or Wheeler and is an expert in all processes and is able to do good class work.

A Planisher or Wheeler of Grade III is a Male Worker of 21 years of age or over who, in addition to fulfilling the conditions of Grade II as above defined, is employed in making Mitred Breast Plates or Handled Plates of any design.

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APPENDIX. C-4.CLASSIFICATION OF LOCKS, Etc.CLASS A.MORTICE AND RIM LOCKS.

Hand-made Mortice.  
 Best Mortice.  
 Stamped case - best quality Mortice.  
 Pin tumbler Mortice and best Rim.  
 All cast brass Rim and Mortice.  
 Best quality lever Rim.

CABINET LOCKS. - Best Brass and Iron - 3 lever and upwards.

PADLOCKS.

Best cast Brass and Iron lever - Hobbs and Chubb's  
 Pattern - 3 lever and upwards, and Barron's Padlocks.

TRUNK LOCKS, &c.

Best cast Bag, Trunk and Attache Case Locks.  
 Best cast Brass Hasps and Turners.  
 When pressed plates are used in same class of work  
 as Cast.

NIGHT LATCHES. - Best quality - lever.

SHOP DOOR LOCKS. - Best quality.

FOUR WAY LOCKS. - Cast frame, Hill's Pattern, Brass and Iron.

GATE LOCKS. - Best quality.

RAILWAY CARRIAGE DOOR LOCKS.AUTOMATIC LOCKS.BRAMAN LOCKS.BEST MOTOR LOCKS.GALLEY LOCKS.

KEYS. - All hand cut, and all best work.

SHACKLE FORGERS. -  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch and upwards.

CLASS B.MORTICE, RIM AND DEAD LOCKS.

Best and Medium Steel case Rim,  
 No. 60 and 60a Rim Locks, all similar (dead)

MORTICE, RIM AND DEAD LOCKS (continued)

Tumbler Rim - Scotch Spring Rack Tumbler and Locks of a similar class and cheap 2 lever.

Stamped case bright Mortice.

All Brass stamped case Rim and Dead Locks and Latches.

CABINET LOCKS.

1 and 2 lever, cast or sheet Brass Cap, screwed.

Common 3 and 4 lever.

2 lever, sheet Brass Cap, rivetted.

PADLOCKS. - Common cast case lever.

Pressed - 3 lever and upwards.

Best Warded Tumbler Brass and Iron.

TRUNK LOCKS. - Best Pressed.

All medium class hasps with spring in joint.

NIGHT LATCHES. - Ordinary Lever.

Tumbler.

Best double handed.

RIM LATCHES. - Best hand made.

YALE PATTERN CYLINDER LATCHES.

STOCK, PLATE AND BANBURY LOCKS, AND WOOD WORKERS

CHEAP MOTOR SLAMS.

KEYS. - Best - other than hand cut.

PRESSERS. - Hand and Power - set own tools.

SHACKLE FORGERS. - Other than in Class A.

CLASS C.

MORTICE, RIM AND DEAD LOCKS.

Cheap Tumbler Rim (dead)

Stamped Japan Mortice.

Ordinary bumped double and single hand Steel case Rim and Dead.



CABINET LOCKS. - Cheap lever.

PADLOCKS. - Common pressed lever.

Medium Tumbler.

TRUNK LOCKS. - All cast hasps with springs in back.  
Medium Tumbler - Brass and Iron.

NIGHT LATCHES. - Best class double handed checked.

RIM LATCHES. - Medium, hand made and cast case.

KEYS - Medium quality.

PRESSERS. - Hand and Power - not set own tools.

CLASS D.

RIM AND DEAD LOCKS. - Common Steel case Rim and Dead Locks.

CABINET LOCKS. - Common.

PADLOCKS. - Common Tumbler and Backspring.

TRUNK LOCKS. - Common Tumbler and Backspring.

NIGHT LATCHES. - Common.

RIM LATCHES. - Common and Steel case.

KEYS. - Common.

APPENDIX. D.1.

Scope and Definition of the Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares Trade Board given in Appendix to the Trade Boards (Stamped or Pressed Metal Wares) Order, 1919.

Trade.

The Stamped or Pressed Metal-Wares Trade, that is to say, - The manufacture from metals (other than precious metals) by the processes of cold stamping or cold pressing (including cutting or piercing) of cabinet fittings, window fittings, curtain accessories, stationers' sundries, drapers' sundries, fittings for gas or electric light, fittings for suitcases or handbags or purses, buckles, eyelets, ferrules, labels, collar studs, tie-clips, thimbles, photograph frames, stamped chains, bells, fancy nails (excluding the shanks), parts of safety razors (excluding the blades), parts of braces or suspenders, corset steels or busks, whistles, tin-openers, medals, or any similar articles or metal parts of such articles;

including:-

- (a) the operations of annealing, hardening, barrelling, polishing, bronzing, nickelling, lacquering, japanning, non-vitreous enamelling, tinning or assembling where these operations are carried on in association with or in conjunction with the manufacture of such stamped or pressed metal articles;
- (b) the operations of carding, boxing, packeting, labelling, weighing, packing, warehousing or despatching where these operations are incidental to or appertaining to the manufacture of such stamped or pressed metal articles;

but excluding:-

- (a) the operations specified in the Trade Boards (Hollow-Ware) Order, 1913;
- (b) the making of buttons or any operations incidental thereto;
- (c) the making of coffin furniture or any operations incidental thereto;

- (d) the making of pins, hairpins, hooks and eyes, haircurlers, snap fasteners, or safety pins or any operations incidental thereto;
- (e) the making of steel pens and the making of stationers' metal sundries or other similar metal articles when carried on as a subsidiary branch of work in association with or in conjunction with the making of steel pens, so as to provide a common or interchangeable form of employment for the workers;
- (f) the minting of coinage of the realm;
- (g) the process of hand-embossing.



# APPENDIX D.2.

## TRADE BOARD (STAMPED OR PRESSED METAL WARES) DRAFT ORDER, 1923 DEFINITION OF THE TRADE.

THE STAMPED OR PRESSED METAL WARES TRADE, that is to say :-

**MAIN MANUFACTURING PROCESSES:** 1. the manufacture from metals in sheet or strip form (other than precious metals or base metals covered when in sheet or strip form wholly or partially by any process or operation with precious metals) by the processes or operations of cold stamping or cold pressing (including cutting, forming, drawing or piercing) of any of the articles or parts of articles described in the First Schedule hereto;

**AUXILIARY PROCESSES:**  
Annealing,  
Hardening,  
Cutting.

2. (i) the processes or operations of annealing or hardening or cutting up of metal by circular shears or guillotine when done (a) to produce any of the articles or parts thereof of which the manufacture forms, by reason of paragraph 1 hereof and the First Schedule, hereto, part of the trade defined in this Order, and (b) in association with or in conjunction with such manufacture;

**Assembling.** (ii) assembling for the purpose of producing any of the articles described (otherwise than by way of exclusion) in the First Schedule hereto or any parts of such articles or any combinations thereof, if the things assembled were mainly manufactured (either inside or outside Great Britain) by the processes or operations described (otherwise than by way of exclusion) in paragraph 1 hereof, when such assembling is done by any process or operation including brazing, soldering, spinning, beading, trimming and any other assembling processes or operations whether similar or not and is done in a department mainly dealing with articles or parts of articles wherever manufactured of which the manufacture if done in Great Britain would form part of the trade defined by this Order;

**Finishing,  
Viewing,  
Warehousing,  
etc.** (iii) the processes or operations described in the Second Schedule hereto when done :-

(a) to any of the articles described (otherwise than by way of exclusion) in the First Schedule hereto or any parts of such articles or any combinations thereof which are mainly manufactured (whether inside or outside Great Britain) by the processes or operations described (otherwise than by way of exclusion) in paragraph 1.

and (b) in a department mainly dealing with articles or parts of articles or combinations of articles wherever manufactured of which the manufacture if done in Great Britain would form part of the trade defined by this Order,

and (c) in association with or in conjunction with any of the processes or operations which form by reason of paragraph 1 or 2 (ii) part of the trade defined in this Order;

Corset  
Steels etc.

(iv) the capping, counting, covering (prior to capping or tipping), looping, studding or tipping of corset busks or steels when done in association with or in conjunction with the manufacture of any of the articles described in the First Schedule hereto by the processes or operations described in paragraph 1 hereof;

MANUFACTURE  
OF BUTTONS  
ETC.

3. the processes or operations described in the Third Schedule hereto when carried on in an establishment mainly engaged in performing the processes or operations described (otherwise than by way of exclusion) in paragraphs 1 or 2 hereof, and the Second Schedule hereto, for the purpose of producing the articles or parts thereof or combinations thereof described (otherwise than by way of exclusion) in the First Schedule hereto;

#### PROVIDED THAT

#### EXCLUSIONS.

4. nothing in this Order shall be deemed to include as part of the trade hereby defined any of the processes or operations described in the Fourth Schedule hereto.

#### FIRST SCHEDULE

ARTICLES OR PARTS THEREOF, KNOWN IN THE TRADE AS :-

- Cabinet, etc. fittings. (i) blind, cabinet or window fittings; curtain accessories; shop fitters' sundries;
- Door, etc. fittings. (ii) door or door-lock fittings or furniture (including escutcheons, finger-plates, handles, key-hole plates, knobs, knockers, letter-plates, number-plates, numerals, roses and any other door or door-lock fittings or furniture whether or not similar to the articles specified);
- Light fittings. (iii) brackets, chandeliers, electroliers, pendants or standards for electric or gas light; gas burners;
- Bag fittings, etc. (iv) fittings or frames for attache cases, hat-boxes, suit cases, trunks; trunk furniture; fittings or frames (including locks which are part of such fittings) for cutlery cases, jewel cases, purses, betting-bags, brief-bags, cash-bags, cricket-bags, hand-bags, kit-bags, tennis-bags or similar bags,  
except when manufactured in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of locks or latches;
- Umbrella fittings etc. (v) ferrules; sunshade or umbrella furniture, namely, caps, ferrules, notches, runners, tip-cups, tips (excluding the making-up or assembling of sunshades or umbrellas); mounts for sunshades, umbrellas or walking-sticks; whip mounts;
- Clothing, fittings, etc. (vi) badges, fittings, letters, numerals and ornaments (other than medals and other similar orders and decorations) for use on belts, clothing or headgear; braces or suspenders used as articles of clothing; buckles, corset busks, steels and tips;
- Bedstead mounts, etc. (vii) mounts or ornaments for bedstead or fenders; fender supports;
- Toilet sundries etc. (viii) druggists' or toilet sundries (including bath fittings, lids for non-metal jars or other non-metal receptacles, screw stoppers, shaving stick cases, soap boxes, ointment



boxes, and any other druggists' or toilet sundries whether or not similar to the articles specified); safety razors (excluding the blades); shaving sets;

Smokers'  
Sundries,  
etc.

(ix) smokers' or tobaccoists' sundries (including ash-trays, automatic lighters, cigar cutters, cigarette cases, fittings for pipe-racks, smokers' cabinets or tobacco jars; match-box covers, match-stands, match-strikers, pipe-covers, pipe-scrappers and any other smokers' or tobaccoists' sundries whether or not similar to the articles specified);

Stationers'  
Sundries.

(x) stationers' sundries (including drawing pins, fountain pen clips, ink-bottle covers, letter or paper clips or fasteners, mathematical instruments wholly manufactured of stamped or pressed parts, pencil cases, pen holders, pen tips, shelf clips, ticket suspenders and any other stationers' sundries whether or not similar to the articles specified; but excluding loose leaf metals and steel pens);

Cycle or motor-(xi)  
cycle  
accessories.

cycle or motor-cycle accessories (including bells, brake-cable clips, lamp-brackets, luggage carriers and clips, oil-cans, pump-clips, spanners, toe-clips, trouser-clips, watch-holders, and any other cycle or motor-cycles accessories whether or not similar to the articles specified);

Miscellaneous (xii)  
articles.

brass-headed or fancy drugget pins or nails (excluding the shanks); chains (other than driving-chains); cheeks, labels, tallies; eyelets; boot or shoe lace-hooks; frames or stands for mirrors; glass-plates, moulding hooks; negro-bells; parcel carriers; photograph frames; picture suspenders; plates for attaching rubber heels to footgear; stair rod ends and eyes; table-bells; thimbles, tin-openers; whistles; advertising novelties; horticultural sundries; table top or similar clips; anti-splash filters; hinges (other than iron or steel hinges).

## SECOND SCHEDULE.

PROCESSES OR OPERATIONS.

- Finishing, etc. (i) dipping, nickelling, plating, tinning, japanning, stove-enamelling, lacquering, bronzing, colouring, painting, varnishing, barrelling, burnishing, grinding, planishing, polishing;
- Viewing, etc. (ii) viewing, inspecting, testing, sorting;
- Warehousing, etc. (iii) boxing, carding, carrying, delivering, despatching, labelling, packeting, packing, portering, warehousing, weighing; or
- (iv) any similar processes or operations.

## THIRD SCHEDULE

BUTTON--MAKING

The manufacture of buttons, button moulds, upholsterers' buttons or upholsterers' button-headed nails (excluding the shanks), from any material by the processes of cutting, sawing, stamping, pressing, turning, drilling, fancying, grinding, barrelling, polishing, japanning, lacquering, dyeing, colouring, painting, varnishing, sewing, crocheting, or the covering of button moulds;

including:

- (a) the manufacture of studs, links or parts thereof from any material other than metal, where such manufacture is carried on in association with or in conjunction with button-making so as to provide a common or interchangeable form of employment for workers;

- (b) the manufacture of shanks for buttons where carried on in association with or in conjunction with button-making;
- (c) the carding of any of the above articles;
- (d) all despatching, packing, warehousing or other operations incidental to or appertaining to the manufacture of any of the above articles;

but excluding

- (e) the manufacture of wooden button moulds;
- (f) the covering of button moulds where carried on in association with or in conjunction with the making of wearing apparel.

FOURTH SCHEDULE

EXCLUSIONS.

Other  
Trade  
Boards;

- (i) Any processes or operations included in :-

the Trade Boards (Coffin Furniture and Cereament Making) Order, 1919;

the Trade Boards (Hollow-ware) Order, 1913;

the Trade Boards (Perambulator and Invalid Carriage) Order, 1919;

the Trade Boards (Pin, Hook and Eye and Snap Fastener) Order, 1919;

the Trade Boards (Toy) Order, 1920;

Common Carriers. (ii) the transport of goods by common carriers;

Other Business. (iii), the processes or operations described in paragraphs 1 or 2 and the Second Schedule hereto in respect of :-



- Jewellery.** (a) any of the articles or parts of articles described in the First Schedule in any establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of real or imitation jewellery;
- Button-making.** (b) any of the articles or parts of articles specified in the First Schedule in any establishment mainly engaged in the Button-making Trade as defined in the Button-making Order, 1919, or any amendment or variation thereof;
- Motor-cars and motor-cycles.** (c) (i) component parts of cycles, motor-cars or motor-cycles;  
(ii) cycle or motor-cycle accessories in any establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of cycles or motor-cars or motor-cycles or of component parts of cycles or motor-cars or motor-cycles;
- Lamps.** (d) Lamps;
- Electro-plate.** (e) articles known in the trade as electro-plate and articles of similar character if manufactured of Britannia metal or nickel or similar white alloys;
- Locks and Latches.** (f) locks and latches (other than locks which are part of fittings for cutlery cases, jewel cases, purses, betting bags, brief-bags, cash-bags, cricket-bags, hand-bags, kit-bags, tennis-bags, or similar bags.)

# A P P E N D I X D.3.

## TRADE BOARD (STAMPED OR PRESSED METAL WARES) DRAFT ORDER 1924. DEFINITION OF THE TRADE.

### THE STAMPED OR PRESSED METAL WARES TRADE, that is to say:-

- (1) the manufacture from metal in sheet or strip form by cold stamping or cold pressing of articles known in the trade as metal small wares;
- (2) the cutting, shearing, annealing and hardening of metal in an establishment in which the metal is used for such manufacture;
- (3) the covering of corset steels prior to capping or tipping in an establishment in which the steels are capped or tipped;
- (4) finishing (including dipping, nickelling, plating, tinning, japanning, stove-enamelling, lacquering, bronzing, colouring, painting, varnishing, barrelling, burnishing, grinding, planishing, polishing, and the capping, counting, looping, studding, or tipping of corset busks or steels) and similar operations when done in conjunction with such manufacture;
- (5) viewing, inspecting, testing, sorting, boxing, carding, carrying, delivering, despatching, labelling, packeting, packing, portering, warehousing, weighing and similar processes or operations when done in conjunction with such manufacture;
- (6) the assembling of the above mentioned wares or parts thereof, whether the things assembled are made inside or outside Great Britain, and
- (7) any process or operation which is included in the Button-making Trade, as defined for the purposes of the Trade Boards Acts, when carried on in an establishment mainly engaged in any of the processes or operations defined in the preceding paragraphs hereof;

**Excluding:-**

- (i) the production by the processes and operations defined in paragraphs (1) to (6) above of any article or part of any article in an establishment in which such article or part is incorporated with or fitted to any other article made in that establishment or part of any other article made in that establishment unless
- (a) such other article or part is wholly or mainly made by the processes or operations specified in paragraphs (1) to (4) and (6) above, or
  - (b) the establishment is mainly engaged in the processes or operations specified in paragraphs (1) to (7) above and/or in brass founding; (1)
- (ii) any processes or operations included in the following Orders or any amendments or variations thereof:-
- the Trade Boards (Coffin Furniture and Cereament-making) Order, 1919;
  - the Trade Boards (Hollow-ware) Order, 1913;
  - the Trade Boards (Perambulator and Invalid Carriage) Order, 1919;
  - the Trade Boards, (Pin, Hook and Eye and Snap Fastener) Order, 1919;
  - the Trade Boards (Toy) Order, 1920;
- (iii) (a) the Manufacture of articles known in the trade as real or imitation jewellery, and (b) the manufacture of any article or part of any article in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of such jewellery;
- (iv) (a) the manufacture of steel and base metal pens and loose leaf metals, and (b) the manufacture of any article or part of any article in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of such pens or metals;

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(1) The words "and/or in brassfounding" were omitted from the final text of the Order made in August 1924.



- (v) (a) the manufacture of locks and latches (other than locks which are parts of fittings of bags or cases) and (b) the manufacture of any article or part of any article in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of such locks or latches;
- (vi) the manufacture of any article or part of any article in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of any electrical machinery appliances, apparatus or accessories other than small electric light fittings;
- (vii) the manufacture of any article or part of any article in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of cast iron hollow-ware;
- (viii) any operation done in an establishment mainly engaged in work known in the trade as the work of an establishment of an outplater to the trade;
- (ix) (a) the manufacture of the component parts of cycles, motor cars or motor cycles, and (b) the manufacture of any article or part of any article when made in an establishment mainly engaged in the manufacture of cycles, motor cars or motor cycles, or of component parts of cycles, motor cars or motor cycles;
- (x) the manufacture of accessories or parts thereof primarily intended for use on motor cars;
- (xi) the manufacture of any article or part of any article known in the trade as electro plate and articles of similar character if manufactured of Britannia metal or nickel or similar white alloys;
- (xii) the manufacture of any article or part of any article from precious metals, or base metals covered when in sheet or strip form wholly or partially by any process or operation with precious metals;
- (xiii) the manufacture of any article or part of any article from wire, either round, flat or shaped;
- (xiv) the manufacture of lamps, medals, iron and steel hinges, harness furniture, driving chains, ammunition, domestic kitchen utensils or parts of such articles;

- (xv) processes or operations specified in paragraphs (1) to (6) above, when performed in an establishment mainly engaged in any process or operation which is included in the Button making Trade as defined for the purposes of the Trade Boards Acts.

## A P P E N D I X    D.4.

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INSTRUCTIONAL CIRCULARACCOMPANYING THE TRADE BOARDS (STAMPED OR PRESSED  
METALWARES) ORDER, 1924

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1. It has been represented to the Minister of Labour that it might prove of assistance to employers and workers and others concerned in the application of the Trade Boards Acts if, in suitable cases, when he makes an Order applying the Acts to a trade for the first time, or when he makes an Order varying the existing description of a trade contained in an Order made under the said Acts, some information were given by a departmental Instructional Circular as to his understanding of the scope of the Order.
2. An authoritative interpretation of the Trade Boards Acts and/or of Orders made thereunder can be given only by the Courts of Law. For this reason, as the Department has always indicated, the views of the Minister in every case of this kind must necessarily be regarded as of a provisional character since the scope of his authority in this respect is confined to the institution of proceedings, with a view to obtaining the decision of the Courts, in cases in which it seems to the Minister that a breach of the Trade Boards Acts or Orders has occurred. Subject to this reservation, and on the understanding that any views which he may express provisionally as to the inclusion within, or exclusion from, the scope of the Acts and/or Orders made thereunder of any trade, process, operation, article or of any class of worker, are given on the information at the time in his possession and are subject to revision in the light of further information, the Minister makes the observations which follow in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 below, for the guidance of all concerned in the application of the Trade Boards (Stamped or Pressed Metalwares) Order, 1924.
3. Under the Order of 1924, of which a copy is given below, the description of the trade contained in the Order of 29th October 1919, is varied by the substitution therefor of the description set out in the Appendix. The following illustrations (which must not be taken as exhaustive or



complete) are given of the terms therein employed:-

In paragraph (1) of the Appendix to the Order, the phrase "metal small wares" may be held to include the following articles:-

- |                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Cabinet, etc.<br/>Fittings.</u> | (i) blind, cabinet or window fittings; curtain accessories; shop fitters' sundries;                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <u>Door, etc.<br/>Fittings.</u>    | (ii) door or door-lock fittings or furniture (including escutcheons, finger-plates, handles, key-hole plates, knobs, knockers, letter-plates, number-plates, numerals, roses and any other door or door-lock fittings or furniture whether or not similar to the articles specified);                         |
| <u>Light<br/>Fittings.</u>         | (iii) brackets, chandeliers, electroliers, pendants or standards for electric or gas light; gas burners;                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <u>Bag fittings,<br/>etc.</u>      | (iv) fittings or frames for attache cases, hat-boxes, suit cases, trunks; trunk furniture; fittings or frames (including locks which are part of such fittings) for cutlery cases, jewel cases, purses, betting bags, brief-bags, cash-bags, cricket-bags, hand-bags, kit-bags, tennis-bags, or similar bags; |
| <u>Umbrella<br/>Fittings, etc.</u> | (v) ferrules; sunshade or umbrella furniture, namely caps, ferrules, notches, runners, tip-cups, tips, mounts for sunshades, umbrellas or walking-sticks; whip mounts;                                                                                                                                        |
| <u>Clothing<br/>Fittings, etc.</u> | (vi) badges, fittings, letters, numerals and ornaments (other than medals and other similar orders and decorations) for use on belts, clothing or headgear; braces or suspenders used as articles of clothing; buckles; corset busks, steels and tips;                                                        |
| <u>Bedstead mounts,<br/>etc.</u>   | (vii) mounts or ornaments for bedsteads or fenders; fender supports;                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

Toilet sundries, (viii) druggists' or toilet sundries (including bath fittings, lids for non-metal jars or other non-metal receptacles, screw stoppers, shaving stick cases, soap boxes, ointment boxes, and any other druggists' or toilet sundries whether or not similar to the articles specified); safety razors (excluding the blades); shaving sets;

Smokers' sundries, etc. (ix) smokers' or tobaccoists' sundries (including ash-trays, automatic lighters, cigar cutters, cigarette cases, fittings for pipe-racks, smokers' cabinets or tobacco jars; match-box covers, match-stands, match-strikers, pipe-covers, pipe-scrappers and any other smokers' or tobaccoists' sundries, whether or not similar to the articles specified);

Stationers' sundries. (x) stationers' sundries (including drawing pins, fountain pen clips, ink-bottle covers, letter or paper clips, or fasteners, mathematical instruments wholly manufactured or stamped or pressed parts, pencil cases, penholders, pen tips, shelf clips, ticket suspenders and any other stationers' sundries whether or not similar to the articles specified);

Cycle or motor-cycle accessories. (xi) cycle or motor-cycle accessories (including bells, brake-cable clips, lamp-brackets, luggage carriers and clips, oil-cans, pump-clips, spanners, toe-clips, trouser-clips, watch-holders, and any other cycle or motor-cycle accessories whether or not similar to the articles specified).

Miscellaneous articles. (xii) brass-headed or fancy drugget pins or nails (excluding the shanks); chains (other than driving-chains); checks, labels, tallies; eyelets; boot or shoe lace-hooks; frames or stands for mirrors; glass-plates, moulding hooks; negro-bells; parcel carriers; photograph frames; picture suspenders; plates for attaching rubber heels to footgear; stair rod ends and eyes; table-bells; thimbles; tin-openers; whistles; advertising novelties; horticultural sundries;

table top or similar clips; anti-splash filters; hinges (other than iron or steel hinges).

4. It will be noted that the description of the Trade, after enumerating in seven paragraphs processes or operations included in the scope of the Order; proceeds to enumerate certain exclusions. It may be convenient if the scope of Exclusion (i) is illustrated by the following examples:-

- (a) A cabinet maker who manufactures his own fittings is outside the scope of the Order as regards the production of any fittings which are incorporated with or fitted to the cabinets made in his own establishment, but if any fittings (produced by the processes, etc., defined in paras. 1-6) are sold by him as fittings, then their manufacture is within the scope of the Order.
- (b) The same remarks would apply to the manufacturer of made-up leather goods (attache cases etc.) making fittings for incorporation with his products.
- (c) Similarly, these remarks would apply in the cases of an umbrella maker who also manufactures fittings for the umbrellas he makes.

It should be carefully noted, however, that exclusion (i) is subject to provisos (a) and (b) thereof which are self-explanatory.

5. In addition to exclusions covered by the general terms of Exclusion (i), note should be taken of the specific exclusions in paras. (ii) to (xv); these require no explanation.



STAMPED OR PRESSED METAL WARES TRADE BOARD  
GENERAL MINIMUM TIME-RATES AND PIECE-RATES  
BASIS TIME-RATES AS AT PRESENT OPERATIVE.

MALE WORKERS.

A. Braziers, Burnishers, Drop-Stampers, Dippers, Dippers who are also Bronzers, Annealers, Polishers.

	General Minimum Time Rates per week of 47 hrs.		Piece-Work Basis Time-Rates per week of 47 hrs.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
(1) Workers of 21 years of age and upwards.				
Grade I.	55.	6	64.	0
" II.	62.	6	72.	9
" III.	67.	6	79.	0
<u>Polishers only.</u>				
Grade I.	55.	6	64.	0
" II.	64.	6	75.	3
" III.	69.	6	81.	6

N.B. (a) The General Minimum Time-Rate for workers of 21 to 21½ years of age who are of Grade I is 49/6 per week.

(b) There are only # Grade I rates applicable to Dippers and Annealers.

-----

(2) Workers under 21 years of age.				
20 & under 21 yrs.	39.	3	46.	3
19 " " 20 "	34.	3	40.	0
18 " " 19 "	29.	3	33.	9
17 " " 18 "	26.	3	30.	0
16 " " 17 "	22.	0	25.	0
15 " " 16 "	18.	0	20.	6
Under 15 years of age.	14.	0	16.	0

-----

**B. Workers other than those in occupations specified in A. on previous page.**

**General Minimum Time-Rates.**

**Per Hour.**

	d.
21 years of age and over.	11
20 and under 21 years.	9
19 " " 20 "	8
18 " " 19 "	7
17 " " 18 "	5½
16 " " 17 "	4½
15 " " 16 "	3½
Under 15 years of age.	3

**Piece-Work Basis Time-Rates.**

15 per cent above the appropriate General Minimum Time-Rate.

-----

**FEMALE WORKERS.**

**A. Polishers, Drop-Stampers.**

	General Minimum Time-Rates. per hour d.	Piece-Work Basis Time- Rate. per hour. d.
(a) Workers of 18 years of age and over:-		
During first 12 months of employment after the age of 18.	8	10
After completion of 12 months after the age of 18.	9	
Provided that, in the case of female workers entering either branches of the trade specified in this paragraph for the first time at or over the age of 18 years, the General Minimum Time-Rates applicable during the first two months of employment shall be	7	
(b) Workers of 17 and under 18 years of age	7	
Workers of 16 & under 17 yrs.	6¼	
" " 15 " " 16 "	5¼	
" " under 15 yrs. of age.	4	

-----

**B. Hand-Brush Japanners, Hand-Brush Lacquerers, Blow-Pipe Braziers, Solderers, Dippers (1).**

(1) For qualifications attaching to these occupations, vide text, Chapter 7. p.

	d.	d.
(a) Workers of 18 years of age or over:-		
During first 12 months of employment after the age of 18.	7	
After completion of 12 months of employment after the age of 18.	8	9
Proviso as above in A.	6	
(b) 17 and under 18 years of age.	6	
16 " " 17 " " "	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	
15 " " 16 " " "	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	
Under 15 years of age.	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	

-----

<u>g.</u> All Other Female Workers.		
18 years of age and over	6 $\frac{1}{2}$	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
17 & under 18 years of age	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
16 " " 17 " " "	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
15 " " 16 " " "	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Under 15 years of age.	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	3 $\frac{3}{4}$

-----



APPENDIX D. 6.COFFIN FURNITURE SECTION OF THE COFFIN FURNITURE  
AND CEREMENT MAKING TRADE BOARD.GENERAL MINIMUM TIME-RATES AND PIECE-WORK BASIS  
RATES AS AT PRESENT OPERATIVE.MALE WORKERS.**A. Dressers and Stampers (21 years  
of age and upwards)**

Grade I.  
" II.  
" III.

General Minimum Time-  
Rates.Column IV Rates.

57s.	6d.	per week.
65.	0	" "
71.	0	" "

**B. Polishers and Planishers (or  
Wheelers) (21 years of age and  
upwards)**

Grade I.  
" II.  
" III.

59.	0	" "
68.	0	" "
73.	0	" "

Proviso relating to workmen entering  
the trade for the first time at or  
over the age of 21 years.

For first 3 months of employment.

10. 0 per wk. less.

For second 3 " " "

5. 0 " " "

-----

**Planishers****C. Dressers, Stampers, Polishers (or  
Wheelers) (under 21 years of age)**

Under 15 years of age.

12. 0

15 and under 16 years of age.

15. 6 per week.

16 " " 17 " " "

18. 6 " "

17 " " 18 " " "

21. 0 " "

18 " " 19 " " "

(a) Less than 2 years' experience  
in branch of the trade in which  
engaged.

21. 0

(b) 2 years' and less than 3 years'  
experience.

27. 0

(c) Not less than 3 years'  
experience.

30. 0

19 and under 20 years of age:-

(a) Less than 3 years' experience.

27. 0

(b) 3 years' and less than 5 years'  
experience.

33. 0

(c) Not less than 5 years'  
experience.

37. 6

20 years and under 21 years of age:-	
(a) Less than 3 years' experience.	33. 0
(b) 3 years' and less than 5 years' experience.	39. 0
(c) Not less than 5 years' experience.	43. 6

-----

D. Packing, Rough Warehousing and Despatching, or other operations incidental to or appertaining to the manufacture of coffin furniture from any metal by any process.

Workers under 15 years of age.	12. 0	pr. week.
15 and under 16 years of age.	15. 6	" "
16 " " 17 " " "	18. 6	" "
17 " " 18 " " "	21. 0	" "
18 " " 19 " " "	22. 0	" "
19 " " 20 " " " :-		
(a) Less than one year's experience in the work on which they are employed or similar work <sup>(1)</sup>	24. 6	
(b) Not less than one year's experience, etc.	28. 0	
20 years and under 21 years of age:-		
(a) Less than 1 year's experience, etc.	31. 0	
(b) Not less than 1 year's experience, etc.	35. 0	
21 years of age and over:-		
(a) Less than 1 year's experience, etc.	47. 0	
(b) Not less than 1 year's and less than 5 years' experience, etc.	50. 0	
(c) Not less than 5 years' experience, etc.	56. 0	

-----

#### Piecework Basis Time-Rates

15 per cent above the General Minimum Rate applicable.

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(1) Vide. Footnote on page Chapter 3, Part (II) for meaning of the phrase "similar work".

FEMALE WORKERS.General Minimum Time  
Rate per week of 47  
hours.A. Polishers.

		S.	D.
(a) 1st year of employment	} as a polisher	26.	0
(b) 2nd and 3rd years of employment		30.	0
(c) After completion of 3 years		32.	0

Provided that with respect to Polishers who have had not less than 3 years' experience on the operation of Polishing and are capable also of Roughing, by whatever process and of Finishing, the minimum rate payable shall be

38. 0

-----

B. Heavy Hand-press Workers, Stampers, Blackers (of over 18 years of age)

(a) Less than 1 year's experience on class of work on which employed.	25.	0
(b) Not less than 1 and less than 3 years' experience, etc.	29.	0
(c) Not less than 3 years' experience, etc.	31.	0

-----

C. Power Press Workers, Light Hand Press Workers, Lace Cutters, Lacquerers, Blackers (under 18 years of age)

Under 15 years of age.	11.	0
15 and under 16 years of age.	13.	0
16 " " 17 " " "	15.	0
17 " " 18 " " "	18.	0

18 years of age and over:-General Minimum Time-Rates.  
18 yrs. and under 21 yrs. of age.      21 yrs. of age and over.

(a) Less than 3 years' experience, etc.	24. 0	25. 0
(b) Not less than 3 years' experience, etc.	26. 0	27. 0

-----

D. (1) Packing, Warehousing, Despatching, or other operations incidental to or appertaining to the manufacture of Coffin Furniture from any metal by any process.



D. (2) All other females not covered by  
A, B, C, or D (1)

General Minimum  
Time-Rates per week  
of 47 hours.

Under 15 years of age.  
15 and under 16 years of age.  
16 " " 17 " " "  
17 " " 18 " " "

s. d.  
11. 0  
13. 0  
15. 0  
18. 0

18 years of age and over:-

(a) Less than 3 years' experience, etc.

(b) Not less than 3 years' experience, etc.

18 years and  
under 21 yrs  
of age

21 years of  
age and over

23. 6

24. 6

25. 6

26. 5

-----

Piecework Basis Time-Rates

For workers of 18 years and over, 15 per cent above the appropriate General Minimum Time-Rates.

## A P P E N D I X E.

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### DEFINITION OF THE AREA SPECIFIED AS "BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT" FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE CENSUS OF 1921

---

#### Part of Staffordshire :-

County Boroughs of Smethwick, Walsall, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton.

Municipal Borough of Wednesbury.

Urban Districts of Amblescote, Bilston, Brierley Hill, Brownhills, Coseley, Darlaston, Heath Town or Wednesfield Heath, Parry Barr, Quarry Bank, Rowley Regis, Sedgeley, Short Heath, Tottenhall, Tipton, Wednesfield, Willenhall.

Rural District of Dudley and Walsall.

#### Part of Warwickshire :-

County Boroughs of Birmingham, Coventry.

Municipal Borough of Sutton Coldfield.

Rural Districts of Coventry, Foleshill, Meriden, Solihull.

#### Part of Worcestershire :-

County Borough of Dudley.

Urban Districts of Bromsgrove, Lye and Wollescote, North Bromsgrove, Oldbury, Redditch, Stourbridge.

Rural District of Bromsgrove and Halesowen.

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# APPENDIX. F.

(1)

## MEMBERSHIP OF BRASSWORKERS' SOCIETY IN BIRMINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD.

1913 - 1920.

Branch.	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
Bloxwich	-	-	567	-	284	281	263	237
Edgbaston	651	622	567	600	736	944	1298	1289
Walsall	536	533	512	512	960	1113	1382	1494
Coventry	620	582	1117	1112	1394	1471	1848	1959
Ludley	562	619	460	440	565	661	971	1000
Willenhall	-	140	?	350	363	302	319	367
Wednesbury	23	24	33	34	37	41	43	40
West Bromwich	-	-	-	-	194	218	368	345
Smethwick	-	-	-	-	-	-	75	199
Redditch	1180	1679	2498	2469	2479	2483	2908	2898
Bromsgrove	-	-	-	-	-	27	51	49
B'ham Central	6479	6185	5761	6224	7924	8339	11178	11315
" Small Heath	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	742
" Aston	-	-	-	-	-	-	470	671
" Handsworth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	56
" Selly Oak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	133
" Sparkhill	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
Total	10,101	10,624	10,888+	11,741	14,986	15,880	21,174	22,836

(1) Annual Reports, 1913-1920.



## APPENDIX G.

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MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ENGINEERING EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION AND THE UNIONS CONNECTED WITH THE ENGINEERING AND FOUNDRY TRADES, ARRIVED AT IN FEBRUARY 1917.

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It is agreed that, having regard to the special circumstances of the War, the following shall be the principles upon which wages changes shall be arranged for the period of the War :--

- (1) That existing agreements or practice under which applications for general alterations in wages are dealt with shall to that extent be suspended until the termination of the War, or for such further periods as may be agreed upon by the parties thereto. This shall not refer to agreements or practice whereby the wages of any trades in any district or department rise or fall with the fluctuations in another district or industry not covered by this agreement.

Nor shall it prevent the Unions bringing forward for special consideration at the hearings referred to in paragraph 2(a) the case of any district in which they claim that the rates of wages are unduly low or that the total amount of war advance is not adequate.

On the other hand, the Federation shall be entitled to bring forward for similar consideration any special cases they desire.

(2) During such period of suspension, the following procedure shall be observed, provided the consent of the Committee on Production is obtained :-

(a) The Committee on Production shall in the months of February, June and October, after hearing parties, consider what general alterations in wages, if any, is warranted by the abnormal conditions then existing and due to the war.

(b) The award of the Committee on Production shall be an award under the Munitions of War Acts and shall be of national application to all federated firms in the branch of the trade concerned.

(c) The first award shall take effect in all districts on the first full pay day in April, and the altered rate shall continue until amended by a further award in accordance with the provisions hereof. Subsequent awards shall specify the date upon which the alteration awarded shall take effect.

---

The following memorandum was also agreed between the parties :-

"The Engineering Employers' Federation and the Unions whose signatories are appended hereto recommend to His Majesty's Government that arrangements should be made whereby all employers in the trade or trades affected should be subject to the awards which may be made by the Committee on Production in virtue of the agreement hereto attached."

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To this memorandum was appended a list of 50 trade unions which were signatories to the agreement.



# APPENDIX H

## THE ENGINEERING AND THE NATIONAL EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION

### FEMALE LABOUR

### STANDARD RATES

To become operative on and from January 1st 1930

1 Age.	2 Basis Rate for 47 hr. week.	3 Cost of living bonus per week.	4 Fluctuating factor per 7 points in cost of living.	5 Present total calculated on 84 points of the cost of living.
14	8/-	2/-	84	10/- per week
15	8/8	3/-	84	11/8 " "
16	9/4	4/-	84	13/4 " "
17	10/8	6/-	84	16/8 " "
18	12/-	8/-	84	20/- " "
19	13/4	8/-	84	21/4 " "
20	14/8	8/-	84	22/8 " "
21 & over	16/-	8/-	84	24/- " "

The foregoing are minimum rates.

Local Associations have discretionary power, having regard to all relevant considerations to authorise Federated Firms to pay higher rates than those above specified.

(Wages stabilised for a period as in Col5: sliding scale not operative.)

APPENDIX I.CONDITIONS AS TO OVERTIME.BRASSFOUNTRY TRADES.

Overtime shall be paid for the first two hours per day at the rate of time and a quarter and afterwards time and a half, in both cases after the normal working hours have been made. Double time to be paid for Sundays and Christmas Day, and for such fixed holidays as are recognised in the district. In any case where a workman loses time for which the employer is responsible such loss of time shall not be taken into account in computing his overtime rates. Payment for night-shifts shall be paid at the rate of time and a quarter.